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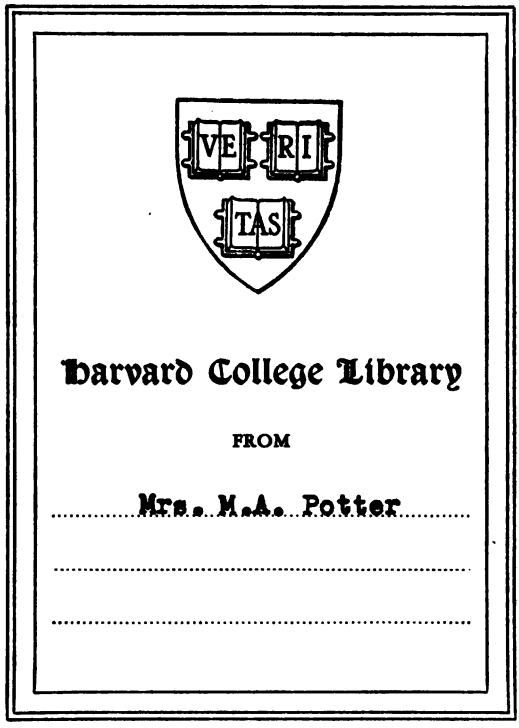

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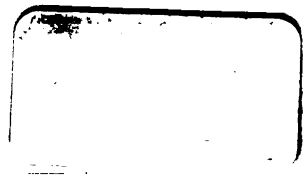

E. Scott sc.

Richard B. Sheridan Esq.

Printed by C.P. Harrison

SELECT

SPEECHES,

FORENSICK AND PARLIAMENTARY,

WITH PREFATORY REMARKS.

BY

N. CHAPMAN, M. D.

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH, AND MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, &c. &c.

——Pietate gravem ac meritis si forte virum quem
Conspexere, silent, arrectisque auribus astant;
Ille *regit dictis animos et pectora mulcet*.....VIRG.

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SELECT SPEECHES.

MR. WILBERFORCE'S SPEECH,

DELIVERED ON THE SECOND OF APRIL, 1792, IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON A MOTION FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

IT is now more than twenty years since the momentous and deeply interesting question of the abolition of the slave trade engaged the attention of the British senate. During this time there have been repeated discussions of it, in which the most transcendant eloquence was displayed. On each occasion, some of the noblest talents that ever adorned or dignified a deliberative assembly, were exercised. The whole of the debates are eminently entitled to preservation. We must, however, limit our selection to three speeches. These are well reported, and will be found to produce a thorough conviction, in every liberal mind, not only of the unrighteousness, but of the inexpediency of this, the most cruel, detestable, and consummately wicked measure that has ever been devised by mercantile avarice or sanctioned by a sordid, narrow, and misguided policy.

To Mr. Wilberforce much credit is due for having introduced the subject into parliament, and for prosecuting it with unwearied zeal, and persevering industry, till his ultimate success.

Early in the session of 1787, he announced his intention of bringing forward a motion *relative to the slave trade*. But, by ill health, which interrupted the attendance to his publick duties, he was prevented doing it for nearly two years.

During the session of 1789, he submitted to the house of commons a series of propositions, which, after reviewing the principal circumstances, illustrative of the slave trade, concluded with declaring that *no considerable inconvenience would result from its discontinuance.*

These propositions were cordially defended by all the leading members of the house, without regard to political distinctions. They received especially, the support of Pitt, Fox, and Burke. But, to afford an opportunity for the collection of testimony, the house refused to come to an impromptu decision upon them. No further notice was taken of the subject, before the year 1791, when Mr. Wilberforce moved "that the trade carried on by British subjects for the purpose of obtaining slaves, on the coast of Africa, ought to be abolished."

Notwithstanding the eloquence and influence both of the ministry and opposition were enlisted in its behalf, the motion was lost by a majority of seventy-five votes.

But the unfavourable issue of this contest served only to invigorate the resolution of the friends of humanity who, now swore an eternal fidelity to their cause, and pledged themselves to an unshaken constancy of exertion in its service.

When, therefore, the discussion of the subject was renewed the succeeding session, there was such a blaze of eloquence from the advocates of abolition as, perhaps, never before had been witnessed in the house of commons. The speeches of Mr. Wilberforce Mr. Fox, and particularly that of Mr. Pitt, observes a contemporary writer, are still remembered by the spectators of this scene with the liveliest emotions of intellectual pleasure. So irresistible was the eloquence of Mr. Pitt, that it was imagined the question would be carried by acclamation. The speech, indeed, had great effect. On a division of the house, there were only a comparatively small number of votes against *the total abolition.* But a majority were in favour of an amendment to the resolution, making the abolition *gradual,* instead of *immediate.*

The proposition finally adopted was, "That it shall not be lawful to import any African negroes into any British colonies, in ships owned, or navigated by British subjects, at any time after the 1st day of January, 1796."

Nevertheless, the absolute prohibition of the trade did not take place till last year. Mr. Wilberforce has, however, lived to behold, and to participate in the triumph of his exemplary exertions.

SPEECH, &c.

SIR,

IN entering on the great business of this day, a business in itself of the first importance, and which, after having so long occupied publick attention, is, at this moment the subject of universal expectation and solicitude, it is natural to imagine that I must feel no small degree of diffidence and apprehension. It is, however, a satisfaction to me to reflect, that it will not be necessary for me to take up so much of the time of the house, as I have felt myself compelled to do on former occasions. For, besides that I might well be content to leave the task of enforcing the proposition I shall bring forward, to the greater abilities and more powerful eloquence of those by whom I have the honour to be supported, the whole of this subject has been already so thoroughly investigated; every part of it has been so canvassed and scrutinized, that it may be sufficient for me, now, merely to refer you to our past discussions, and to spare the house and myself the pain of a laborious and minute detail.

I have before had occasion to remark, that nothing has tended more to prevent the impartial and candid consideration of our arguments, than the indiscriminate censures which may have sometimes been really cast on the whole body of West Indians. There may have been those who, suffering their passions to hurry them to hasty and immature conclusions, have connected with the evils of the system, the personal character of every individual embarked in it, as being closely and inseperably associated. The charge, rashly preferred, has been indignantly repelled. Heat

and acrimony have prevailed on both sides, reproaches and invectives have been mutually retorted, parties have been formed with all their consequent effects of prejudice and bitterness; the West Indians in this state of things have grown incapable of listening dispassionately to the voice of reason, and many perhaps of the very best and most benevolent amongst them have been the most warm, because most conscious of the injustice of the accusations they deemed cast on them, and resenting and spurning at them with emotions of honest disdain.

The house will do me the justice to recollect, whatever may have been said to the contrary, that this is a language I have never held; nor have I been kept from it by motives of decorum or personal civility. It is a language to which, in my heart, I never assented, and which has always appeared to me not only injudicious and impolitick, but contrary to truth and justice, and to what abundant experience has taught us of the nature of the human mind. I the rather make this declaration at the outset of my speech, in order, that if in the course of what I shall say on a subject which cannot but excite the strongest emotions in every man who is not dead to the feelings of his nature, any over warm or too general expressions should escape me, it may be understood what are the cool deliberate opinions of my mind. I wish to speak the words of conciliation; I wish particularly to invite the gentlemen of the West Indies to accompany me in my progress. I call upon them to investigate with me, fully and fairly, the various evils arising from the slave trade, and those evils especially, which belong to the West Indies. If I can but bring them to do so, I am persuaded we shall agree in the result. I cannot but believe that they will acknowledge the defects of their own system, and deplore the evils with which it so abounds. For, sir, though I have acknowledged that there are many owners of slaves of benevolent tempers and generous hearts, who would be glad to use their absolute power for purposes of kindness and beneficence, yet this must not reconcile

us to the system of West India slavery itself, pregnant as it is with great and innumerable miseries. A Trajan and an Antoninus do not reconcile me to a despotick monarchy. We should distinguish in these cases between what belongs to the person, and what belongs to the system. We should rejoice indeed in a splendid exception to the ordinary character of tyrants; but not allow ourselves to be thereby seduced into an approbation of tyranny.

Yet, even under a Trajan and an Antoninus, the fatal effects of this system were but too discernible, though more flagrant and palpable under a Nero and a Caligula. An impartial West Indian, therefore, instead of being incensed by the frankness of my investigation, should rather join me in it, and assist me in tracing the mischiefs to their proper source. These will appear by no means greater than might be expected from considering the various circumstances of the present case. It has been justly remarked, that aristocracy is a worse form of government than monarchy, because the people are subject to many tyrants instead of one; but if this be true, what shall we say to the present case, where despotick power is not the privilege of high birth, or of extraordinary eminence, or wealth, or talents, but where it is an article to be bought at market, like any other commodity, by every man who has forty pounds in the world. There is often an elevation and liberality of mind, produced by the consciousness of superiour rank, and consequence, and authority, which serve in some degree, to mitigate the fierceness of unrestrained power, and counteract the evils of which it is naturally productive; but when it comes into the possession of the base and the vulgar, the evils will then be felt in their fullest extent. The causes of this we will not stop to examine, but the truth itself is important, and it bears directly on the present question. It suggests to us the wretched state of the slaves in the West Indies, where they are often liable to the uncontrolled domination of men of all ranks, understandings, and tempers; often, perhaps, of the most

ignorant and worthless, and meanest of the human race. This is no picture of the imagination, but the very sentiment which the scene itself impresses on the mind of a judicious observer. Every man, almost, who can have a horse here, might be possessed of a slave there. Who is there that considers this, but must expect to find scenes of wretchedness and cruelty, on which it is impossible to look without indignation and shame?

But let us recollect, that this is not the whole of the present case. For, of the more opulent and more liberal West India proprietors, how many are there who are absent from their own estates, residing in this country, or in other parts of Europe? They send across the Atlantick declarations and directions dictated by the humanity of their own minds: but the execution of these must be left to persons of a description altogether different. This forms a very leading feature in the delineation of the present system, and I wish every gentleman to consider it in its various bearings and relations. It is not I only who make this remark, or the friends of the abolition of the slave trade; it was long ago strongly insisted on by Mr. Long, the historian of Jamaica. He pointed out the abuse; he specified the many evils which flowed from it; he stated that the insurrections had chiefly been found to break out among the slaves of absentee proprietors; he regretted that often the manager had an interest altogether distinct from that of the owner; that it was frequently his object to make large crops of sugar, regardless of the cruelties to be exercised on the slaves, or of the ruinous load of expense to be incurred in purchasing new slaves, to replace such as should be worn out by excessive labour; and then, at last, he concludes, they retreat like a rat from a house in flames, and go, with the credit of large crops on their backs, to another part of the island. The truth of these animadversions has been confirmed by the positive testimony of many respectable witnesses; they conversed on the spot with the managers, and it was easy to be collected,

nay, sometimes it was frankly confessed that this was their main principle.

This alone would be sufficient to show, that the orders of the absentee planters, however good, will not be executed, and will be constantly operating to defeat the effects of their benevolence. But it is not necessary to dwell on this distinction of *interest*. Many causes concur to produce a difference of *feelings*. The very circumstance of being distinguished by their colour from the rest of the community, prevents this poor people from calling forth the feelings of sympathy. They are a marked species; they are looked upon as a different race of beings, and are not considered as having a title to the same humanity and tenderness, which the worst of men would allow to be the right of those whom they acknowledge to be their fellow creatures. Consider how in minds originally tender, the feelings will be blunted by habit; reckon up all these various circumstances and estimate their amount, and you will naturally conclude, that the situation of the slaves in the West Indies must indeed be deplorable.

I shall not here detail the particulars of their state, having done it so minutely on a former occasion: I then proved my assertions by the positive testimony of our own witnesses; by various circumstances and considerations arising out of the very nature of the case, or suggested by scrutinizing and laying together different assertions from our opponents. I then specified many general evils resulting from the nature of the system, and showed its tendency to render the state of the slave to be lamented in what regards his food, clothing, lodging, &c. Legal protection I showed he had none, and I shall be again ready to bring indisputable proof of the assertion, if it should be denied; but I would gladly spare myself the painful recital. I willingly pass over the detail of all those circumstances of degradation to which they are subjected; their being worked in the fields *under the whip like cattle*, instead of being treated like moral agents, capable of forecast and reflection; their being

often *branded;* their being excepted out of the system of decency, and a thousand other disgraceful and humiliating particulars. Surely I must believe, when all these things are considered, that the gentlemen of the West Indies themselves will eagerly join with us in endeavouring to do away these grievances, and put an end to miseries so complicated and intolerable. I will do them the justice to believe that they have looked after a remedy, but they have looked in vain. They have not found it; nor will they ever find it but in the proposition which I bring forward. I deliver it as my decided opinion, the result of a careful investigation of the whole of this great subject, that the only practicable remedy is *stopping the further importation of slaves from Africa.*

What other remedy has been suggested? Colonial regulations! Into this subject I went at large when the question of abolition was last before the house, and I could now only repeat the arguments I urged on that occasion. The hinge on which it all turned was the *inadmissibility of negro evidence;* the effects of which, have been frankly avowed by many of our opponents themselves, and are indeed so obvious as to render it superfluous to insist on them. What would be the situation of the bulk of the people in this country if gentlemen of five hundred pounds per annum were alone admitted as witnesses? But the case in the West Indies is much worse. For, where two or three white men being on a plantation, it might be hoped one would come forward against the other, but they are kept back by a thousand considerations of mutual connivance, of similarity of situation, of intimate connexion. They are fellow managers, brother overseers, whom even the *esprit du corps* would prevent from undertaking so invidious an office, as that of criminating each other.

But colonial regulations, if futile and ineffectual for the protection of the slave, would, if carried into execution, be abundantly operative in another direction.

If you were to give them the protection of laws, not nominally but really, not the shadow but the sub-

stance of civil rights, you would awaken in their minds a consciousness of freedom which would only turn alike to their ruin and that of their masters. It is in vain to attempt to reconcile impossibilities. Freedom and slavery cannot be made to coalesce. Instead of being satisfied with what ought to be granted, they would only feel more the want of what should be withheld. The privileges which should be extended to them would only serve to render the galling and ignominious distinctions under which they must still be kept more irritating and vexatious: insurrections would soon follow, and the whole result in one scene of slaughter and confusion. Look to the history of past insurrections, and you will find these assertions confirmed by actual experience. Let gentlemen recollect the immense disproportion of the blacks and whites in our islands, and consider it in conjunction with the positions I have been laying down, and it is impossible we can differ in the conclusion: but if such is the present wretched and degraded state of the slaves, surely there is no man who must not long for that happy moment when they can be rescued from it without danger; a danger which I grant subsists, and renders their state of degradation almost as necessary for their own, as for their master's comfort and security. But whence does this arise? From the constant influx of slaves from Africa; who, torn from their homes for ever; resenting the wrongs they have suffered; looking on their masters and on all around them not as friends and protectors, but as enemies and tyrants, are ever ready to rise and wreak their vengeance on their injurious oppressors.

This was acknowledged long before I brought forward the question of abolition. Mr. Long has argued at great length on the danger of importing such numbers of Africans. "Twenty-seven thousand slaves imported in two years, and our importations are now still greater, are alone sufficient, he says, to account for mutinies, insurrections, &c." The rebellions in seventeen hundred and five and six, he further states, to have been occasioned by the imported natives of

the Gold Coast. This is not only Mr. Long's doctrine, but that of every reasonable and observing man. I met with a curious proof of it the other day in a pamphlet, lately published in Carolina by a planter, who was endeavouring, not apparently actuated by motives of justice and humanity, but of policy, to continue the prohibition of African slaves, which had already subsisted for some years. He urges various arguments, but that on which he chiefly insists is the danger of an insurrection. He reminds his countrymen of a former rebellion in South Carolina, occasioned by the rising of the Angola slaves, thence vulgarly called the *Gulla war;* he points to the island of *St. Domingo,* where, he says, you have a striking exemplification of the truth of my position.

And this leads me, sir, to say a few words on the late unhappy transactions in that unfortunate island. I shall not, however, go at large into them at present, but must reserve to myself the right of doing so, if it should be rendered necessary by any thing urged in the course of the debate. I felt it my duty to investigate the causes of the disturbances in question, and I do declare myself decidedly convinced, and will enter, if required, into proofs of the assertion, that they did not arise from any attempts to abolish the slave trade, or from the efforts of societies established in France for that purpose. The case was simply this. The free people of colour, though the privileges of citizens were bestowed on them by law a century ago, had never in fact been admitted to the enjoyment of them, but had been treated, though many of them men of property and of education, as beings of an inferiour order. The animosities had almost grown to their height, and had nearly broken out into actual hostilities before the period of the French revolution. What passed then and since, the violence with which the white inhabitants of the island asserted their own rights, whilst with equal warmth they were denying them to the men of colour; agreements in the island made and broken, as convenience suggested; the contradictory decrees of the

national assembly, sometimes granting the desired immunities, sometimes retracting the grants, and thus trifling with their feelings, and working them up into a rage too big to be suppressed, will sufficiently explain. What wonder if the ferment occasioned by all these circumstances, and the favourable opportunity afforded by these divisions in which their masters were occupied, produced a general rising of the slaves, who had rebelled before in conjunctures less suited to their purpose? They did rise, and dreadful was the consequence. No man, I am sure, deplores more than myself those cruel and humiliating transactions; and I make this very motion because I deplore them, and would in our own islands prevent the repetition. Consider the immense disproportion of numbers. There are now in Jamaica near three hundred thousand slaves, and but about twenty thousand whites of all ages and descriptions. We are every year importing into that island a greater strength of blacks than there is of whites to be opposed to them. Where is this to stop? Do you seriously mean to continue this system? I should really have thought the West India gentlemen would themselves have implored us, if we had entertained no such design, to arrest the further progress of this growing and pernicious malady. Thus, sir, were the safety of the islands only in question, you could not but agree to my proposition.

But I must recur to what I before laid down, that these importations do not tend more to produce confusion and disorder, than to retain the unhappy slaves themselves in their actual state of wretchedness and degradation. It is this that would even render it unsafe to punish white men for the ill treatment of their slaves, except very rarely, and in the most atrocious instances. But surely, sir, we cannot bear to leave these poor creatures thus sunk below the level of their species; and I am persuaded the West India gentlemen themselves would be glad to afford them relief. They would be glad, I trust, to put them under the protection of laws, but this must be done rationally

and soberly. After what I have said, I am not afraid of being told I design to emancipate the slaves: I will not indeed deny that I wish to impart to them the blessings of freedom. Who is there that knows its value, but must join with me in this desire? But the freedom I mean is that of which, at present, they, alas! are not capable. True liberty is the child of reason and of order. It is indeed a plant of celestial growth; but the soil must be prepared for its reception. He that would see it flourish, and bring forth its proper fruits, must not think it sufficient to let it shoot as it will in unrestrained licentiousness:

Luxuriantia compescet, nimis aspera sano
Lævabit cultu, virtute carentia tollet.

Would you then impart to them these inestimable benefits, take away that cause which at present obstructs their introduction?

Nor would the good effects of stopping the importations be confined to the slaves, or the safety of the islands only be thereby promoted. It would tend to the planter's benefit in another respect. By the facility of purchasing African slaves he is often drawn into fresh expenses; he is ultimately plunged into inextricable embarrassments, and wishes at length that this channel of supply had been shut up from him. This evil also was insisted on by Mr. Long, the historian of Jamaica, who actually proposed a temporary prohibition of the importation of African slaves with a view to its prevention. I hope it will not be deemed invidious that I so often quote the work of this gentleman; but rather a proof the respect I pay to its authority, and I appeal to it the more willingly, because it was written long before the abolition of the slave trade had become the subject of publick discussion.

But I frankly acknowledge that the consideration of the planter's benefit, from stopping the importations, does not interest me in any degree so much as that to be thence derived by the unhappy slaves. Losing by degrees the painful recollection of their native and early connexions; conceiving new attach-

ments to their dwelling places, to their families, to their masters, they would gradually rise in the scale of beings. No longer ready on every occasion to start into insurrections, they would cease to be the continual objects of the planter's jealousy and suspicion. It would be no longer necessary for the general safety to extinguish in them the principle of moral agency. They would feel more respectable in themselves and be more respected by others; and by degrees, the harshness of their present bondage being transformed into the mildness of patriarchal servitude, they would become capable of still greater blessings and more ennobling privileges. Gentlemen will observe it is the peculiar merit of this plan, that though its full effects cannot be produced at once, we are all the while tending to their complete enjoyment, with a uniform and uninterrupted course. The slaves will daily grow happier, the islands safer, the planters richer; the whole will be like the progress of vegetation, the effects are not at first perceptible, but the great principle operating in ten thousand ways, will gradually change the whole face of things, and substitute fertility and beauty in the place of barrenness and desolation. Who is there that contemplates this delightful prospect, but must ardently long to have it realized? It is, I am persuaded, our common wish, our universal, our impatient expectation.

But it was formerly urged that this was a remedy which, however desirable in itself, the islands were not as yet in a state to admit. It was contended that they could not keep up their numbers without further importations from Africa; that were these stopped, their gangs would continually be growing weaker and weaker, until, at length, their estates should be thrown wholly out of cultivation. When the question of abolition was last before the house, I went into this subject so much at large, that I need only now advert to what I then urged; but, if it be thought necessary, I shall repeat and confirm it. It was then made out by my right honourable friend* with his usual accu-

* Mr. Pitt.

racy, and that too from documents furnished by our opponents themselves, that the islands were actually keeping up their stocks of slaves. His calculations, so far from being refuted, have not, that I know of, even been denied; and the fact was confirmed by the positive testimony of a gentleman of great experience, examined in the island of Jamaica. We showed you that it had taken place under every possible circumstance of disadvantage; that the various evils under which the slaves laboured, and above all the general inattention to the breeding system, would have led us to expect a great decrease; but, that in spite of them all, great and numerous as they were, an increase having begun to take place, we were warranted in believing that the amendment of one or two particulars out of many, would alone be sufficient to render the increase rapid; and we found that negroes had actually increased considerably in various countries, and climates, and situations, many of them extremely ill adapted to their constitutions. We pointed out also many modes, whereby, if it should be deemed necessary, the chasm could be filled up, which some might think would be occasioned by immediate abolition. A great supply of hands may be obtained by turning into the field some of the superfluous domesticks, with whose immense number every gentleman, who knew any thing of the West Indies, was perfectly acquainted. Improvements in machinery were suggested; the transfer of the lands from sugar to cotton, which, requiring fewer hands, would let loose a number of labourers for other purposes. These, and other modes were proposed, whereby the quantity of laborious industry might receive supplies. But what, above all other circumstances, I must now insist on is, that five years importations have since taken place. Had there been any small errour in the calculations of my right honourable friend, or had I strained my subsidiary arguments a little too far, it is impossible to deny but that this must now be more than rectified, and that the islands are, at length, in a state to suffer not even a temporary inconvenience from the admis-

sion of this salutary expedient. If, therefore, you have any regard for the happiness of the slaves, or for the safety of the islands; nay, if you are even dead to these powerful incentives, and were alive only to considerations of the planters' interest, you could not but consent to the measure I recommend to you, of *stopping the further importation of African slaves.*

And now, sir, abstaining, for a while, from those topicks, which, I confess after all, are nearest to my heart, I will slightly touch on what were originally said to be other disadvantages that would follow from the abolition. I wish to add up every possible item before I proceed to place any thing on the opposite side of the account. By this mode, it will more plainly appear how much the balance is in my favour. It was originally urged that the African trade was a nursery for seamen, and that its abolition would, of course, be highly injurious to our naval strength. This part of the subject was very early taken up by a gentlemen whose services, in the whole of this great cause, can never be overrated. I need hardly say I allude to Mr. Clarkson. He asserted, as the result of a long and laborious inquiry, that of the sailors employed in the African trade, between a fifth and sixth actually died; and that they seldom brought home more than half of their original crews. Nothing was more vehemently repelled or more obstinately resisted than these positions, till, at length, having long born with these clamorous contradictions, we moved last year for the muster rolls, documents prepared by our opponents themselves, and kept in their possession, and which cannot, therefore, be supposed to have been fabricated to serve our purpose. From these, Mr. Clarkson's calculations were fully justified. It appeared, that of twelve thousand two hundred and sixty-three persons, the number of the original crews, there had died two thousand, six hundred and forty-three, the average length of their voyages being twelve months; whilst, on the contrary, in the West India trade, in which the length of the voyage was seven months, of seven thousand, six hundred and

forty, the number of the original crews, there had died only one hundred and eighteen. But the loss by deaths was not the whole loss to the country. For, besides the broken constitutions of the survivers, which rendered many of them for the rest of their lives incapable of the duties of their profession, so many left their ships in consequence of ill usage, that they seldom brought home more than half of the persons they had taken out. This last circumstance was attempted to be accounted for, from the natural capriciousness of sailors; and it was said that they ran away in as great number from the West India as from the Guinea ships. The direct contrary appeared from the muster rolls, and this too, though from the different ways of paying them in the two trades, their forfeiting little or nothing by quitting the West Indiamen, but much by quitting the Guineamen, the reverse might be naturally expected.

I could say much more on this subject, and, in particular, I could open to you such scenes of cruelty to these unhappy men, as must excite at once the concern and indignation of every one who feels for that mass of his fellow citizens to which this nation owes so much of her safety and of her honour. But I will abstain from this painful detail, and only repeat what I recently observed, that in the outset of this business nothing was more obstinately denied than our *now*, no longer controverted assertions concerning the loss of seamen. This may serve to procure us credit on those points which are still in dispute, and prove that it is not necessary for our opponents to be correct in order to be positive.

I will but just touch on the effects of immediate abolition on our general policy; on our commerce and manufactures, and on the prosperity of the places whence the slave trade is chiefly carried on. We have seen from the accounts upon your table how small a part it constitutes of the trade of Bristol and of Liverpool; and that it has become less profitable of late, cannot be denied by those gentlemen who asserted that the regulations actually introduced would

make it a losing concern. For though it were said that in the heat of opposition they might have pushed their assertions a little too far, yet it will hardly be allowed them at one moment to speak of an actual loss, and at another of an actual gain so great that it would ruin those opulent towns to be deprived of it. After the statements we have lately heard of the publick finances, and our immense exportations of British manufactures, who is there that will insist much on our exportations to Africa, to the amount of about four hundred thousand pounds, or who that will not admit we might soon establish a commerce with that country more beneficial and more innocent, were we to put a stop to this inhuman traffick in the flesh and blood of our fellow creatures?

Nor can it even be urged that the immediate abolition of the slave trade would, in this view, be productive of considerable present inconvenience. Consider what happens both at the commencement and close of every war; how, in the former case, the existing channels for the conveyance of our manufactures are suddenly barred up. The system of political economy is of so complicated a nature, that in innumerable instances we find the effect of the evils we had apprehended prevented by means of which before we had no actual ascertainment or distinct perception. I remember it is observed by Mr. Adam Smith, in his incomparable treatise on the Wealth of Nations, that at the conclusion of every war, more than one hundred thousand soldiers and sailors are at once discharged; and we see no alteration in the wages of labour, or in any other particular which the sudden influx might be expected to affect.

As to another branch of national policy, that I mean which concerns the extension of our cultivation in the West India islands, I will say nothing at present. From our evidence it abundantly appears, that the opening of new plantations with imported Africans is a system the most ruinous to the individuals concerned; and the intelligent reasonings of Mr. Irvine

must have convinced the house that if this extension of cultivation be considered only in a national view, it is by no means to be desired by any real well wisher to the secure and abiding prosperity of this country. Thus, sir, it appears that, leaving Africa wholly out of the question, justice and humanity would dictate to us the abolition of the slave trade in the strongest terms, as the only sure expedient for bringing the slaves into that state of comfort wherein it must be our common wish to see them placed; that in the abolition alone can the islands find security, and that this measure is enforced on us by the principles of sound policy, and a regard to the political interests of the British empire.

But, sir, though I have suffered myself to dwell so long on these considerations, I now proceed to that part of the subject which, indeed, most interests my heart. Look to the continent of Africa, and there you will behold such a scene of horrours as no tongue can express, no imagination can represent to itself. The effects of this inhuman commerce are indeed such that we lend our assent to them reluctantly: yet, they are proved so clearly, that it is not possible for any man to doubt of their reality; and were positive testimony defective, the reason of the thing would have rendered it altogether unnecessary. How can it but follow, from our going to that country, and offering our commodities to the petty chieftains for the bodies of their subjects, but that they will not be very nice in the means they take to procure the articles, by the sale of which they are to supply themselves with the gratifications of appetites which we have diligently and but too successfully taught them to indulge.

One mode they take is that of committing *depredations upon each other's territories;* and the very nature and character of wars in Africa is such as might have been expected from the great motive from which they originate. They are a sort of predatory expeditions, of which the chief object is the acquisition of slaves; not, but that as it is natural to imagine, these often prove the occasion of more general

and continual hostilities, inasmuch as they greatly add to the causes of dissension between neighbouring communities. When on a former occasion I urged somewhat to this effect, I remember the direct contrary was asserted, and in defiance of reason and common sense it was said, that wars had never been caused by the slave trade. I repeated my reasoning, and urged that it was not to be expected that I could be able to adduce specifick instances in a country where letters were unknown, and the very existence, as well as the causes of past events, must, in general, be soon forgotten. Again, I was challenged to produce a single instance; the natural barbarity of these people was noticed as being alone sufficient to render Africa a scene of general carnage; and, in particular, the cruelties of a certain king of Dahomey were mentioned, and the dreadful slaughter which attended his invasion of a neighbouring kingdom enlarged on. To say nothing of the unfairness of extending to the whole of that vast district from which we collect slaves, what, at the utmost was only proved of a single kingdom, I must own I was a little shaken in my belief of the representations of the state of this very kingdom itself, when I heard it said by another gentleman,* who, though not favourable to our cause, gave his evidence with a frankness and fairness which did him great honour, that the Dahomans were a very happy people. But how was I astonished, how did I admire the strange coincidence, when I found in this very king of Dahomey, the very specifick instance that had been required of me; and that these very cruelties of his, in the conquest of Whydah, on which such stress was laid, were committed by him in a war undertaken with a view of punishing the adjacent nation for having stolen away some of his subjects, for the purpose of selling them for slaves. This curious anecdote was brought to my notice by a noble friend of mine, to whose friendship on this, as on many other occasions, I am greatly indebted. In his valu-

* Mr. Devaynes.

able compilation* you will read the transaction at large; and the reflection is very remarkable which the conduct of the king of Dahomey, in this instance, extorted from a historian, who though himself concerned in the slave trade, seems not to have lost all sense of its enormity. "The king's actions carry great reputation, for, by the destruction of this trade, he relinquished his own private interests for the sake of publick justice and humanity; and I have a natural propensity to wish the king of Dahomey well, since he has redeemed his countrymen from being sold as slaves."

But, sir, the exciting of wars between neighbouring states, is almost the lightest of the evils Africa is doomed to suffer from the slave trade: it is indeed one of the greatest calamities to which we are liable in this more highly favoured quarter of the world; but it is a *luxury* in Africa. Still more intolerable are those *acts of outrage which we are continually stimulating the kings to commit on their own subjects.* These are still less to be guarded against, and the cruelty of them is aggravated by the consideration that they are perpetrated by those who, instead of the despoilers and ravagers, ought to have been the guardians and protectors of their people. A chieftain is in want of European commodities, and being too weak or too timid to attack his neigbours, he sends a party of soldiers by night to one of his own defenceless villages; they set fire to it, they seize the miserable inhabitants as they are escaping from the flames, and hurry with them to the ships of the Christian traders, who, hovering like vultures over these scenes of carnage, are ever ready for their prey. Innumerable are the instances of this kind to be met with in the course of the evidence. Captain Wilson, a gentleman of unquestionable veracity and honour, saw armed parties going out to scour the country for many

* Lord Muncaster's Historical Sketches of the Slave Trade, and of its effects in Africa, addressed to the people of Great Britain.

successive evenings. You have in the evidence more detailed stories of this kind, which cannot but affect the hardest heart. We are told perpetually of villages half consumed, and bearing every mark of recent destruction; and more than one of our witnesses has been himself engaged in one of these very night expeditions I have mentioned. Nor do we learn these transactions only from our own witnesses, but they are proved by the testimony of slave factors themselves, whose works were written and published long before the present inquiry. But it is not only by the chieftains that these disorders are committed, though even from their attacks poverty itself is no security. Every one's hand is against his neighbour. Whithersoever a man goes, be it to the watering place, or to the field, he is not safe. He never can quit his house without fear of being carried off by fraud or force; and he dreads to come home again, lest, on his return, he should find his hut a heap of ruins, and his family torn away into perpetual exile. Distrust and terrour every where prevail, and the whole country is one continued scene of anarchy and desolation.

But there is more yet behind! It might naturally have been imagined that no means of procuring slaves would be left unresorted to; and accordingly the inventive genius of man, strained to the very utmost in this pursuit, has made *the administration of justice* itself a fertile source of supply to this inhuman traffick. Every crime is punished by slavery, and false accusations are perpetually brought in order to obtain the price for which the party convicted is to be sold; sometimes the judges have a considerable part of this very price, and universally fees on every trial. But it is needless to insist on the acts of injustice which must hence arise. If with all that we have accomplished by securing the independence of judges, by the institution of juries, and by all our other legal machinery, we have not done too much to secure the equitable administration of law in this civilized country, what must be the consequence in Africa, where every man is stimulated to bring an action against his

neighbour by the hope of obtaining part of the price for which he will sell, and where he knows the judge, who is to preside, has himself an interest in the conviction. In corroboration of these reasonings, we have again the testimony of the historians of Africa; and we may trace the laws, which were originally mild, gradually growing more and more severe, in proportion to the predominance of the slave trade. Mr. Moore, an author of credit, and himself seven years factor to the African company, says, "since this trade has been used, all punishments are changed into slavery; there being an advantage in such condemnation, they strain the crimes very hard, in order to get the benefit of selling the criminal. Not only murder, theft, and adultery are punished by selling the criminal for a slave, but every trifling crime is punished in the same manner." This, and many other instances of a similar sort, will be found in the compilation I already alluded to.

Nor do we leave it to the natives of this devoted country to commit merely on each other these acts of depredation. Many are *the acts of violence perpetrated immediately by the Europeans themselves*. Numberless are the instances of this kind recorded in the course of our voluminous evidence; and if there had been any doubt of the existence of such practices, they have been confirmed by some late transactions which, much as I wish to avoid detail, I feel it my duty briefly to relate to the committee; the rather because they are master pieces in their kind, and furnish a complete specimen of the various enormities that attend this detested system.

Some gentlemen will perhaps recollect, that in the year 1789, I stated to the house a curious incident that had passed in the neighbourhood of the river Cameroons, whence the master of a Liverpool ship, of the name of Bibby, fraudulently carried off thirty-two relations of one of the chiefs of the country, who had been put on board as pledges for goods. The enormity of the proceeding excited the utmost indignation in the governour of one of our West India islands,

who complained of the outrage in the strongest terms, and spoke in the language of a man who expressed himself the more vehemently from having long smothered his indignation. Scarce had this scene passed at the Cameroons, when another succeeded of a nature still more shocking. Early in the year 1790, the captain of an English ship, which had long been lying in that river, having already despatched one cargo of slaves, by an attendant vessel, to the West Indies, happening one day to send two or three men to get water, a black slave, who was along with them, was seized by a native trader on the ground of the ship's owing him goods to the value of a slave or two. It cannot be expected that the captains of slave ships will be men of peculiar mildness in resenting injuries. The revenge however of the captain in this instance was really an effort of genius, and must appear somewhat singular to gentlemen less acquainted than myself with the habits of the slave trade. In the evening he called up the healthy part of his crew on deck, and ordered them to strip and blacken their bodies all over, putting a piece of cloth round their loins, that they might appear like the natives of the country. They showed some backwardness; but being threatened to be shot through the head if they refused, they reluctantly complied. Thus accoutred, and being armed with muskets and cutlasses, the captain himself, blackened like the rest, and breathing implacable revenge, led them forth, about midnight, to the execution of his purpose. They soon reached the dwelling of the unfortunate trader: they fired upon his wretched family; three of his children were killed on the spot; the man and his wife were desperately wounded; the former died as they were dragging him down to the boat, the latter half an hour after she was on board the ship. The state of society in Africa is such as to produce universal watchfulness: the trader had no sooner heard the noise of a party of men at his door, than he beat his drum; this, with the report of the muskets, alarmed the neighbourhood, and it was with difficulty that the captain and

his party escaped to the ship, several of them being severely wounded, and one afterwards dying of the injury he received.

I do not know that there is any one part of this whole transaction more curious than what I am next to relate, or that tends to prove more indisputably that such scenes as I have been describing are considered as ordinary transactions. The captain does not seem to have expected reprisals; his trade appears to have suffered no interruption, and he continued there for several weeks after in a state of quiet and composure. But, sir, Africans are men, and they have the feelings of men. All this while the fire was not extinct; it only slumbered, and was soon to break forth. In this part of the story also there is much well worthy of notice. Several weeks afterwards, one of the chieftains came on board to pay a friendly visit, and borrow some cutlasses and muskets, alleging the natural pretext, that he was going up into the country to make war, in order to get slaves, and that the captain should have half of the booty. The request was so reasonable, that it could not be refused: any lurking suspicion that might have been entertained of his visit's being hostile was done away, and he was readily furnished with what he required: indeed it would have argued the captain's being very inattentive to the interest of his employers if he had failed to comply with so reasonable, so customary a requisition. Now, sir, I dare say, whatever credit gentlemen may be disposed to give me for the ground work of the story, they conceive these at least are merely my own comments! But astonishing as it may seem, this is almost in terms the captain's own account. So dead and callous does this trade render those who are engaged in it to every sentiment of personal danger and personal character; they have so forgotten the impressions such transactions must once have produced in themselves; and are so lost to the sense of the feelings they must still excite in others, that the captain himself, in a protest he afterwards drew up on account of the loss of the

ship, stated, that the chieftain came on board under pretence of borrowing some arms, as he was going up into the country to trade, and that he furnished him with muskets and cutlasses, *having often lent him arms before.*

He seems not to apprehend it possible that any other blame could attach on him than that of an improvident expenditure of stores; and with all the solicitude of a man intent to preserve his commercial character unimpeached, he is only anxious to exculpate himself from this imputation. Is it possible for any thing to furnish a more striking exemplification of the principles, and nature, and mode of conducting the slave trade? The chieftain and his party perceiving the general state of things favourable to their design (all the healthy part of the crew being absent on the shore) and having thus put the captain off his guard, suddenly seized him, and threw him overboard, hauled him into their canoe, and hurried him to land; where a party of the natives, who had been lying in ambush for the purpose, immediately surprised that part of the crew I spoke of. You doubtless expect to be told that they were all forthwith murdered by these savage Africans. No such thing. They only desired the captain to give them an order for goods on the vessel, with which he was obliged to comply. Now then at least you are prepared to hear that they proceeded to satiate their revenge; and if this might seem something like bad faith, considering the ransom had been paid, the captain himself had set them the example: for on the night before he had sallied forth in the execution of his bloody enterprise, he had drawn the black chieftain on board by a friendly invitation, and had detained him as a pledge for his own safety. But, sir, these barbarians are not yet so improved as ourselves, in cruelty and treachery: they set the captain and his men free without injury, and sent them back to tell the world how much the natives of Africa come behind us in fraud, and outdo us in humanity and honour.

There is nothing more striking to my own mind (I do not know if it may produce the same impression on the committee) than the way in which this transaction came out. It was indeed on a trial in a British court of justice! But was it on a trial for piracy or murder? No, sir: on a mere civil suit, instituted for wages on the part of some of the poor seamen, who, sick and disabled, as I have before mentioned (having been obliged to quit the ship, because the natives threatened to set fire to her, and put them to death after they had taken the captain and healthy part of the crew) were refused by the owners this wretched compensation for all their danger and sufferings. Glad am I to say they obtained a verdict. I beg the committee will bear in mind the whole of this transaction, which shows if any thing can show it, the dreadful nature of the slave trade; its cruelty, its perfidy, its effects on Africa, and on the minds of those who carry it on. But that to which I particularly wish to point your attention, is the nature of the chieftains's application coupled with the captain's declaration that he had often given them fire-arms before; whence you may recollect, that these ravages are customary things, the regular mode of doing business in the slave trade. Remember too, that these transactions were carrying on at the very time our inquiry was going forward, and whilst our opponents' witnesses were strenuously denying, not only the actual, but even the possible, existence of any such depredations.

There is, however, another instance yet behind, which in some respects surpasses in enormity even that I have just now stated. Gentlemen may perhaps recollect some instances in our evidence wherein, when the natives have persisted in asking too much for their slaves, a captain has fired on their towns, and used other compulsory means to bring them down to more reasonable terms. If a few lives should be lost in this mode of adjusting the bargain, it does not much signify; human life is appreciated but at a low rate in Africa.

Now, sir, it will astonish the house to hear of a recent transaction of this sort, exceeding all the former in magnitude and wickedness. This happened no longer ago than last August, after all our arguments and discussions, when, if ever, you would think the slave captains would have been on their good behaviour. Six British ships, three belonging to Liverpool, and three to Bristol, were anchored off the town of Calabar. Gentlemen will recollect the place; it was the scene of a dreadful massacre about twenty years before. The captains of these six vessels thinking the natives asked too much for their slaves, and having in vain endeavoured to prevail on them to moderate their conditions, held a consultation how they should proceed, and agreed to fire upon the town, unless their terms should be complied with. They one evening notified their determination, and acquainted the traders that if they should continue obstinate, they would put it in execution the next morning. *In this instance they kept their word.* They brought sixty-six guns to bear upon the town, and fired on it for two or three hours. Not a single shot was returned. A canoe then came off to proffer terms of accommodation, stating that much execution had been done, which was indeed the less to be wondered at, because the guns had been pointed by old men of war seamen. How dishonourable an exercise of their skill! The parties still not agreeing, whilst the poor people taking advantage of this cessation, were seen on all sides making their escape into the woods, or paddling off in their boats, some one way, some another, the firing recommenced; more damage was done, and the obstinate natives were at length forced into submission. There are no certain accounts of their loss; report said fifty were killed; but some were afterwards seen in the agonies of death, by those who were sent on shore to buy slaves, and others were lying badly wounded. The affair, however, ended as it ought; and I have no doubt we may have the satisfaction to think many of the Liverpool and Bristol owners are some hundred pounds the

richer for this transaction. One circumstance I must add, which I had before omitted, though for my country's sake I would gladly suppress it; and I recommend it in particular to the consideration of those who have urged it as an argument for our carrying on the slave trade, that it would be taken up by other nations if we were to desist from it. A French ship was at the same time in the Calabar river, the captain of which could not be prevailed on, by the British captains, to join in their enterprise. He bought at the high price; and they were obliged to suspend their bloody purpose until he had sailed away with his cargo. Sir, it shocks me more than all the rest to be obliged to say, that I fear these matters are not altogether unknown at Bristol; and yet I hear these very captains are furnished with fresh births, as if they had raised their estimation by this proof of their activity. Yes, sir, at this very moment, whilst we are sitting here, and talking of abolition, in contempt of our debates, in defiance of our inquiries, nay, as if they thought hereby to recommend themselves to the sanction and countenance of a British house of commons. Excuse my warmth. It is impossible for any one, who has the feelings of a man, not to lose his temper in speaking of such proceedings. The house being here clamorous for the names, Mr. Wilberforce stated them; the Thomas, of Bristol, captain Phillips; Wasp, of ditto, captain Hutchenson; Recovery, of ditto, captain Kimber; the Martha, of Liverpool, captain Houston; the Betsey, of ditto, captain Doyle; the Amachree, of ditto, captain ——, I am not quite certain of the name, but I believe captain Lee.

I think, sir, I have already laid enough to the charge of this detested traffick; yet, believe me, if I were so disposed, I could add much more of a similar nature; but I will pass it over, just only suggesting one new topick on which I might enlarge, that, I mean, of our staining the commercial honour of Great Britain, by descending to every petty fraud in our dealings with the natives.

But, not to take up any more of your time on this part of the subject, I must pass on to another, which originally struck my mind as being more horrid than all the rest, and which, I think, still retains its superiority; I mean the situation of the slaves on board ship, or what is commonly called the *middle passage*. I will spare the committee, however, the detail of all those perfections in cruelty which it exhibits: but two or three instances I must mention, because they are of a recent date, and still more because they will tend to convince those who are inclined rather to regulate than abolish the slave trade, that so long as it is suffered to exist, the evils of the middle passage must exist also, though in respect of them, more than any other class, regulation might have been deemed effectual. We were told, I remember, in an early stage of our inquiry, that formerly, indeed, the negroes were but ill accommodated during their conveyance, and, perhaps, there was now and then a considerable mortality; but such had been the improvements of late years, that they were now quite comfortable and happy. Yet it was no longer ago than in the year 1788, that Mr. Isaac Wilson, whose intelligent and candid manner of giving his evidence, could not but impress the committee with a high opinion of him, was doomed to witness scenes as deeply distressing as almost ever occurred in the annals of the slave trade. I will not condemn the committee to listen to the particulars of his dreadful tale, but for the present will content myself with pointing your attention to the mortality. His ship was a vessel of three hundred and seventy tons, and she had on board six hundred and two slaves, a number greater than we at present allow, but rather less, I think, than what was asserted by the slave merchants to be necessary in order to carry on their trade to any tolerable profit. Out of these six hundred and two she lost one hundred and fifty-five. I will mention the mortality also of three or four more vessels which were in company with her, and belonged to the same owner. One of them bought four hundred and fifty, and buried two hundred; another

bought four hundred and sixty-six, and buried seventy-three; another bought five hundred and forty-six, and buried one hundred and fifty-eight; besides one hundred and fifty-five from his own ship, his number being six hundred and two; and from the whole four after the landing of their cargoes there died two hundred and twenty. He fell in with another vessel which lost three hundred and sixty-two: the number she had bought was not specified. To these actual deaths during and immediately after the voyage, add the subsequent loss in what is called the seasoning, and consider that this loss would be greater than ordinary in cargoes landed in so sickly a state. Why, sir, were such a mortality general, it would, in a few months, depopulate the earth. We asked the surgeon the causes of these excessive losses, particularly on board his own ship, where he had it in his power to ascertain them. The substance of his reply was, that most of the slaves appeared to labour under a fixed dejection and melancholy, interrupted now and then by lamentations and plaintive songs, expressive of their concern for the loss of their relations and friends, and native country. So powerfully did this operate, that many attempted various ways of destroying themselves; some endeavoured to drown themselves, and three actually effected it; others obstinately refused to take sustenance, and when the whip and other violent means were used to compel them to eat, they looked up in the face of the officer who unwillingly executed this painful task, and said in their own language, "presently we shall be no more." Their state of mind produced a general languor and debility, which were increased, in many instances, by an unconquerable abstinence from food, arising partly from sickness, partly, to use the language of slave captains, from "sulkiness." These causes naturally produced the dysentery; the contagion spread, numbers were daily carried off, and the disorder, aided by so many powerful auxiliaries, resisted all the force of medicine. And it is worth while to remark, that these grievous sufferings appear to have been in no

degree owing either to want of care on the part of the owner, or to any negligence or harshness of the captain. When Mr. Wilson was questioned if the ship was well fitted; as well, says he, as most vessels are, and the crew and slaves as well treated as in most ships; and he afterwards speaks of his captain in still stronger terms, as being a man of tenderness and humanity.

The ship in which Mr. Claxton, the surgeon, sailed, since the regulating act, afforded a repetition of all the same horrid circumstances I have before alluded to. Suicide, in various ways, was attempted and effected, and the same barbarous expedients were resorted to, in order to compel them to continue an existence too painful to be endured: the mortality also was as great. And yet, here also, it appears to have been in no degree the fault of the captain, who is represented as having felt for the slaves in their wretched situation. If such were the state of things under captains who had still the feelings of their nature, what must it be under those of a contrary description? It would be a curious speculation to consider what would be the conduct towards his cargo of such a man as one of the six I lately spoke of. It would be curious to trace such a one, in idea, through all the opportunities the middle passage would afford him of displaying the predominant features of his character.

Unhappily, sir, it is not left for us here to form our own conjectures! Of the conduct of one of them at least, I have heard incidents which surpass all my imagination could have conceived. One of them I would relate, if it were not almost too shocking for description; and yet I feel it my duty, in the situation in which I stand, not to suffer myself to pay too much attention to what has been well called squeamishness on the part of the committee. If it be too bad for me to recite, or for you to hear, it was not thought too bad for one of those unhappy creatures to suffer, of whom I have this night the honour to be the advocate. There was a poor girl on board, about fifteen years of

age who had unfortunately contracted a disorder, which produced effects that rendered her a peculiar object of commisseration. In this situation, being quite naked, she bent down in a stooping posture, wishing out of modesty to conceal her infirmity: the captain ordered her to walk upright and when she could not, or would not obey, he hoisted her up, naked as she was, by the wrists, with her feet a little distance from the deck; and whilst she there hung, a spectacle to the whole crew, he flogged her with a whip with his own hands. He then hung her up in a similar way by both legs, and lastly by one leg; till at length having thus exhausted the efforts of his savage invention, he released her from her torments. The poor unhappy young woman never again recovered. What with the pain, and what with the shame she suffered, she fell into convulsions, and died within three days. The person who related this fact to me is a professional man, who is ready to declare it upon his oath. He has related to me other acts of barbarity, nearly as atrocious; and you will be little surprised to hear that the cruelties of this wretch were not confined to slaves alone, but that the sailors came in for their share.* Think only that these things passed but a few months ago, and here too, as I have before had occasion to remark, you will observe that this was at the very moment of our inquiry and discussion; and yet, even then they could not, though but for a short interval, suspend their work of cruelty, but pursued it more daringly and desperately than ever. And so will it ever be whilst you employ such agents as the slave trade either finds or makes: you will in vain endeavour to prevent the effects of those ferocious dispositions which this savage traffick too commonly creates; till your regulations can counteract the force of habit, and change

* Mr. Wilberforce being called upon for the name of the captain, said, captain Kimber is the man who performed these feats, the commander of one of the six ships in the affair of Calabar.

the nature of the human mind, they will here be of no avail.

Nor, as you must have already collected, can they have all that effect which has sometimes been supposed even in preventing the mortality. I do not, indeed, deny that the regulating act has lessened this mortality, but not in the degree in which it is generally imagined; and even in the last year I know the deaths on shipboard will be found to have been between ten and eleven per cent. on the whole number that was exported. In truth, you cannot reach the cause of this mortality by all your regulations. Until you can cure a broken heart, until you can legislate for the affections, and bind by your statutes the passions and feelings of the mind, you will in vain sit here devising rules and orders: your labour will be nugatory: you cannot make these poor creatures live against their will: in spite of all you can do they will elude your regulations; they will mock your ordinances and triumph, as they have already done, in *escaping* out of your hands.

O, sir! are not these things too bad to be any longer endured? I cannot but persuade myself that whatever difference of opinion there may have been, we shall this night be at length unanimous. I cannot believe that a British house of commons will give its sanction to the continuance of this infernal traffick. We were for awhile ignorant of its real nature; but it has now been completely developed, and laid open to your view in all its horrours. Never was there, indeed, a system so big with wickedness and cruelty: to whatever part of it you direct your view, whether to Africa, the middle passage, or the West Indies, the eye finds no comfort, no satisfaction, no relief. It is the gracious ordinance of Providence, both in the natural and moral world, that good should often arise out of evil. Hurricanes clear the air, and the propagation of truth is promoted by persecution: pride, vanity, profusion, in their remoter consequences contribute often to the happiness of mankind; in common what is in itself evil and vitious, is permit-

ted to carry along with it some circumstances of palliation; even those descriptions of men that may seem most noxious have often some virtues belonging to their order. The Arab is hospitable. The robber is brave. We do not necessarily find cruelty associated with fraud, or meanness with injustice. But here the case is far otherwise. It is the prerogative of this detested traffick to separate from evil its concomitant good, and reconcile discordant mischiefs; it robs war of its generosity; it deprives peace of its security. You have the vices of polished society without its knowledge or its comforts; and the evils of barbarism without its simplicity. Nor are its ravages restricted as those of other evils to certain limits either of extent or continuance; in the latter it is constant and unintermitted; in the former it is universal and indiscriminate. No age, no sex, no rank, no condition is exempt from the fatal influence of this wide wasting calamity! Thus, it attains to the fullest measure of pure, unmixed, unsophisticated wickedness; and scorning all competition or comparison, it stands without a rival in the secure, undisputed possession of its detestable preeminence.

Such being the true character of that abhorred system which I this night call upon you to abolish, it would, I think, be matter of inexpressible astonishment to any one, who being new to the discussion of this subject, should be told for the first time, that it had been sometimes attempted to be defended on the ground of humanity and benevolence. I do not know that it is necessary to urge any thing in reply to this strange argument, and I doubt whether any man possessed of all the powers of eloquence could make its absurdity appear more strongly than by simply stating it, and leaving it to itself. To honour it, however, with somewhat more particular attention than it deserves; it has been said that the slaves we take are captives and convicts, who, if we were not to carry them away, would all be butchered, and many of them sacrificed at the funerals of people of rank, according to the savage custom of Africa. Now, here,

I beg it may be observed in the first place, that this argument applies only to the case of those slaves who are prisoners of war and convicts, and what I have already said must have convinced the committee, how much of our supply is derived from other sources. And were it even true that you saved all of these two descriptions of people from certain death, these advocates for humanity would not have much on which to congratulate themselves, would they but estimate the total waste of the species which resulted from this exercise of their philanthropy.

But this plea, miserable as it would be if it were true, is altogether false and groundless. I could prove it so by a thousand quotations if I were not afraid of trespassing on the patience of the committee: you have but to glance on the evidence, and find it acknowledged by our opponents themselves, that the custom of ransoming prisoners of war prevails in Africa; and as for what has been said of human sacrifices, I do not deny that there have been some instances of these; but they have been by no means proved more numerous or frequent than amongst other barbarous nations; and where they exist, being acts of religion in order to quiet the manes of the deceased chieftain, they would probably not be waved for the sake of a little commercial advantage. In the very instance of the king of Dahomey, which has been so much insisted on, one of the most intelligent and strenuous of the witnesses against the abolition declared he believed that if the convicts should fall short for these sacrifices, the requisite number would be supplied by innocent people who would be seized for that purpose: so that admitting even the truth of your own assertion, you bring away such as have deserved to suffer, in order to leave the innocent to be sacrificed in their stead.

But if not sacrificed, the slaves, if we were to refuse to buy them, would be destroyed. To this assertion also we can oppose not only the reason of the thing, but abundant, complete, indisputable testimony. In fact nothing can be more ridiculous than the

grounds on which it has been asserted that the refused slaves are destroyed or sacrificed. I will mention to the committee a single instance or two as a specimen of the rest; it is to be found in the evidence of captain Frazer. I was curious to discover how a person declared to be in general a man of an amiable temper, could reconcile it to his principles and feelings to carry on the slave trade. The solution was furnished me when I found that he had imbibed this notion of the unhappy fate of the refused slaves. Considering that he himself told us of other modes wherein they were disposed of in various places, I thought him a little unreasonable in this opinion: however, he frankly gave us the grounds of it. I must beg the committee to hear them in his own words: "I had a Cabenda boy with me as a linguist, who informed me, one evening, that a slave, whom I would not purchase, was put to death in the following manner: the owner of this slave who came from the inland country, as I was informed, called the traders and fishermen together under a large tree. He told them that the slave whom the white man would not buy, had run away from him several times in his own country. He accused him of dishonesty. He declared that by the custom of that country, every man that met a runaway slave was obliged to bring him back to his master, for which the master was obliged to pay him. He said that this slave run away three times from him; that he paid more for bringing him back than he was worth: that he derived no benefit from his labour; that he had offered him to a white man, who refused to purchase him at the price he asked: that he was determined to put him to death to prevent the necessity of paying any more for bringing him back, and as an example to the rest of his slaves."

He then recites the particulars of the mode wherein the owner proceeded to the execution of his purpose. But can any thing be more unfair than to urge this as a proof that refused slaves in general are put to death? It seems almost as if the owner of this boy had been

on his guard to prevent the possibility of such a construction: he does not act like a man who thinks he may take away the life of his slave on the mere impulse of his own caprice; but he is solicitous not to subject himself to such an imputation. He is anxious to justify himself to the surrounding natives, who might otherwise resent his conduct. He accordingly convenes them for that purpose, and explains at large the grounds of his proceeding. Another instance is mentioned by captain Frazer, wherein a sucking child was about to be put to death, if he had not humanely rescued it by the offer of a jug of brandy. But he has himself furnished you with an explanation of this incident; and on reading it a little further you find that it was the child of a woman who had been purchased the same day by another captain. Captain Frazer carried the child on board and restored it to its mother, who went on her knees and kissed his feet.

But leaving this topick of the massacre of refused slaves, it is added by the same votaries of humanity, that the general state of things in Africa is such, that the slave trade cannot render it worse; that it is kindness to the inhabitants of that country to take them out of it. In short, that instead of being the worst enemies as I have stated, we have been in fact the benefactors of the Africans. This is a part of the subject on which very mistaken notions have prevailed, and I beg leave to read certain extracts I have made with relation to it; they are many of them selected from the publication of my noble friend which I before referred to.

From these it will appear that the state of things in Africa is by no means so barbarous as has been represented, and that the situation of those who are in the condition of slaves themselves, is in no degree a state of hardship and degradation. "Axim, says Bosman, is cultivated, and abounds with numerous large and beautiful villages; its inhabitants are industriously employed in trade, fishing, or agriculture; they export rice to all the Gold Coast." "There is a great number of fine populous villages on the

river Ancobar." "The inhabitants of Adom always expose large quantities of corn, &c. to sale, besides what they want for their own use." The people of Acron seldom or never go to war; they husband their time and grounds so well, that every year produces a plentiful harvest." Speaking of the Gold Coast, he says, "their most artful works are the gold and silver hat bands they make for us, the thread and contexture of which is so fine that I question whether our European artists would not be put to it to imitate them; and indeed if they could, and were no better paid than the negroes, they would be obliged to live on dry bread." "The people of Fida are so strongly bent on trade and agriculture, that they never think of war." Speaking of the Fetu country, he says, "frequently when walking through it I have seen it abound with fine well built and populous towns, agreeably enriched with vast quantities of corn and cattle, palm wine and oil. The inhabitants all apply themselves without distinction to agriculture: some sow corn, others press oil, and draw wine from the palm trees."

I will now read from the evidence certain extracts descriptive of the state of slaves in Africa; and from these it will appear whether even their situation is such a one as to give them much reason to envy the condition of their brethren, who have been carried to the West Indies. "The slaves are well fed, their labour is not constant, and there is no driver in Senegal and Gambia." "Domestick slaves have all the advantages of freemen." Born slaves cannot be sold but for a crime on trial by their own clan." And again, "domesticks are not sold by their masters but for enormous crimes, and after trial by their own clan." Many slaves in Africa are not easily distinguished from their masters." "Slaves are treated well and familiarly at Angola." "On the continent of Africa slaves are few in number, they are treated well, eat with their masters, work along with them, and are well clothed." "The slaves of persons in Africa are treated by them as Europeans treat people of their

own family." Not to multiply extracts unnecessarily, I will only add on this head the declaration of a witness, who informs, that though "blacks in Africa have said they were slaves, he never discovered this from their treatment."

I cannot dismiss this branch of the subject without begging the committee to attend to some further extracts from authors of credit, which suggest how far Africa has benefited from her connexion with Europeans. They shall be but few, for were I disposed to increase them, there would be no end of my labour. I will pass over many I had selected for the purpose of stating them to the house, which respect the practices of breaking up villages, and of depredations both of the whites on the blacks, and of the blacks on each other, encouraged and stimulated by the Europeans. But I must beg leave to read to the committee some of these which speak of the exertions of our active benevolence in inciting them to war, and of the effect of the slave trade upon the criminal law and the administration of justice. From these last it will appear how far we can pretend with any decency, that by our humane interference we had rescued their convicts from the barbarous severity of their sanguinary laws, and introduced a milder system of criminal jurisprudence.

Smith, who was sent out by the royal African company, in 1726, assures us, that "the discerning natives account it their greatest unhappiness that they were ever visited by the Europeans. They say that we christians introduced the traffick of slaves, and that before our coming they lived in peace. But, say they, "it is observable wherever christianity comes, there come with it a sword, a gun, powder, and ball."

"The Europeans," says Brue, "are far from desiring to act as peace makers among them. It would be too contrary to their interests: for the only object of their wars is to carry off slaves, and as these form the principal part of their traffick, they would be apprehensive of drying up the source of it, were they to

encourage the people to live well together." "The neighbourhood of the Damel and Tin keep them perpetually at war, the benefit of which accrues to the company, who buy all the prisoners made on either side, and the more there are to sell, the greater is their profit: for the only end of their armaments is to make captives to sell them to the white traders."

Artus of Dantzick says, that in his time, "those liable to pay fines were banished until the fine was paid, when they returned to their houses and possessions."

Bosman affirms, "that the punishment for adultery is by fine. The fine among the common people is four, five, or six pounds, and among the rich more, perhaps one or two hundred pounds, he has heard of fines of five thousand pounds." "The punishment for theft on the Gold Coast is by fine." The greatest crimes at Whydah are generally compensated by money." Speaking of the Gold Coast, he says, "Nobody is here fined above his ability, unless by an accumulation of crimes he hath given occasion thereto, and then he is sent into slavery." At Benin he informs us, that "theft is punished by restitution and fine, and if the thief is poor, after the restitution of the goods, if in his power, he is very well beaten."

Moore, who resided seven years on the coast, as factor to the company, says, "since this trade has been used, all punishments have been changed into slavery; there being an advantage in such condemnation, they strain the crimes very hard in order to get the benefit of selling the criminal. Not only murder, theft, and adultery, are punished by selling the criminal for a slave, but every trifling crime is punished in the same manner."

Atkins, speaking of adultery and theft, says, "trade has so infected them with covetousness and fraud, that the chiefs will put snares both for the one and the other, driving at the profit, and not at the punishment of a crime."

Loyer affirms, that "the king of Sain on the least pretence sells his subjects for European goods. He

is so tyrannically severe, that he makes a whole village responsible for the faults of one inhabitant, and on the least offence sells them all for slaves."

Such, sir, are the testimonies that have been born, not by persons whom I have summoned, not by friends to the abolition, but by men who were, many of them, themselves engaged in the slave trade. Many, many more I could add of the same kind; but these are abundantly sufficient to refute the unfounded assertions of these pretended advocates for humanity. But in truth were they even to make good their assertions, they would in my mind little mend their cause: were it ever so true, as it is most false, that you made them happier by taking them away, this would give you no right to take them against their will.

I have sometimes been reproached with my extravagant humanity. But I may now repel the accusation, and for myself declare, as I have said before, that I rest this question not on the ground of humanity but of RELIGION AND JUSTICE. It has sometimes also been imputed to me, that I am actuated by a spirit of fanaticism and bigotry; but I beg it may here be observed, that it is on my opponents and not on me that these charges may be fairly urged. Theirs are the very principles on which have been rested the grossest systems of bigotry and superstition that ever disgraced the annals of mankind. On what other principles was it that Mahomet sent forth his Mussulmen to ravage the world? Was it not these that lighted the fires of the inquisition? Have not both these systems been founded on the notion of your having a right to violate the laws of justice, for the purposes of humanity? Did they not both plead that they were promoting the eternal happiness of mankind; and that their proceedings were therefore to be justified on the dictates of true and enlarged benevolence? But the religion I profess is of another nature; it teaches me first to do justice, and next to love mercy; not that the claims of these two will ever be really found to be jarring and inconsistent. When you obey the laws of God, when you

attend to the claims of justice, you will then also best consult and most advance the happiness of mankind. This is true, this is enlarged benevolence; and of this it may be affirmed in the unparalleled language of a great writer, "that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage; the very least as feeling her care, the greatest as not exempted from her influence: both angels and men, and every other creature, though each in different sort and order, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy."

I shall next touch for a moment on a ground whereon our opponents, driven as they are from place to place in quest of argument, have often attempted to take their stand. I mean of other nations being likely to carry on the slave trade if we were to abandon it; on which the conclusion is then rested, that if so, however wicked, however cruel it is, we might as well carry it on ourselves. Admitting the supposition to be just, the inference that is drawn from it was so completely exposed, last year, by the right honourable gentleman opposite to me,* that it can hardly be necessary for me now to say a syllable on the subject. I will, therefore, only repeat what I have declared on former occasions, that I have no doubt if we were to abolish the slave trade, other nations would follow our example.

Nor can any thing be more unreasonable than for gentlemen to urge against the probability of this event, that the nations in question, so far from abolishing, have even lately passed edicts, and granted bounties for the encouragement of the trade. If for four or five years we have been carrying on a laborious investigation into its nature and circumstances; if after developing its genuine character, and ascertaining its dreadful effects, we still hang back and hesitate, was it fair to expect, as I argued on a former occasion, that the nations in question should relinquish

* Mr. Fox.

the trade without inquiry, little acquainted as they must be supposed to be with its accumulated horrours, and even confirmed by our delay in the idea of their having been exaggerated? And is it just to infer, that they will continue in the commission of these crimes knowingly, because they have hitherto done it ignorantly? In fact, sir, an incident that has lately happened in a neighbouring kingdom, tends to confirm this very reasoning, and it should encourage the friends of abolition to find that their generous efforts have already produced some effect. Denmark has consented to abolish the slave trade in [illegible] years. Dreadful indeed is the idea of tolerating for a moment, much more for so long a term, such a system of wickedness; but let it be said in excuse for Denmark, that she knew but little of its enormity in comparison with us; and that she also, with somewhat more colour of reasoning, if the argument can in any case be endured, may allege that the number of slaves she takes off was so small, that her going out of the trade would make no real difference in the number exported from Africa. But can we say this, who carry off almost as many as all the rest of Europe put together? There is in fact no nation in the world by which this argument may not be used with more decency than by ourselves.

But miserable as this pretext is, I am afraid it will be found on a closer inquiry that we have no right to avail ourselves of it. Let us ask ourselves honestly, if we act like those who are really influenced by this consideration. If we were sincere in our professions, we should surely labour to convince the nations of Europe of the enormities of the slave trade, and strive to prevail on them to desist from it; whereas we do the very reverse; we sanction it by our example, we push it to an unparalleled extent, and furnish them with this very argument, which, if they accept, the slave trade can never be abolished at all. But there are some persons who adopt a still bolder language, and who declare without reserve, that religion, and justice, and humanity command the abolition of the

slave trade, but that they must oppose the measure because it is inconsistent with the national interest. I trust and believe no such argument will be used this night; for what is it but to establish a competition between God and Mammon, and to adjudge the preference to the latter? What but to dethrone the moral Governour of the world, and to fall down and worship the idol of Interest? What a manifesto was this to the surrounding nations? What a lesson to our own people! Come then ye nations of the earth, and learn a new code of morality from the parliament of Great Britain. We have discarded our old prejudices; we have discovered that religion, and justice, and humanity, are mere rant and rhapsody! Why, sir, these are principles which Epicurus would have rejected for their impiety, and Machiavel and Borgia would have disclaimed as *too* infamous for avowal, and *too* injurious to the general happiness of mankind. If God in his anger would punish us for this formal renunciation of his authority, what severer vengeance could he inflict than our successful propagation of these accursed maxims? Consider what effects would follow from their universal prevalence; what scenes should we soon behold around us: in publick affairs, breach of faith, and anarchy, and bloodshed; in private life, fraud, and distrust, and perfidy, and whatever can degrade the human character, and poison the comforts of social and domestick intercourse. Men must retire to caves and deserts, and withdraw from a world become too bad to be endured.

If it be, however, our formal determination thus to surrender ourselves, without reserve, to the domination of hard, unfeeling avarice; if we do resolve thus to sell ourselves for gain, let it not, at least, be for such a gain as this, so minute, so dubious; which the ablest and best informed men in the kingdom declare to you to be an injurious, rather than a beneficial possession; let us achieve some clearly profitable villany, some master stroke of wickedness; we shall then at least be justified on our own principles;

but in this instance you incur the utmost guilt in pursuit of the smallest and most questionable profit, and discredit not your hearts only, but your understandings. And if ever there was a season when we should least of all act on this principle, it is the present day of our unexampled prosperity. Shall we choose this very moment when we are enjoying so much from the bounty of Providence, for openly trampling its laws under our feet, and pouring contempt on its most authoritative injunctions? Why, sir, if there were one of the brute creation, who, being himself pampered to the full, were thus to make his happiness consist in vexing and persecuting those weaker animals whom his strength enabled him to injure with impunity, we should drive it from us as too bad to be domesticated by mankind. Oh, sir! let us spare a small part of our full cup of happiness, in order to give comfort and joy to thousands upon thousands of our fellow creatures who are now groaning under oppression and wretchedness. Nay, you are not even called upon in this instance to give up any thing you enjoy; but here you may do good by wholesale, and at no expense; you may enrich others and be yourselves no poorer. Surely it is considerations like these, it is the desire of ceasing from the guilt of abusing the bounty of Heaven, and a sense of the obligation they are under to communicate to others the happiness they themselves enjoy, that has caused the people of Great Britain to step forward on this occasion, and express their sense more generally and unequivocally than in any instance wherein they have ever before interfered. I should in vain attempt to express to you the satisfaction with which it has filled my mind, to see so great and glorious a concurrence, to see this great cause triumphing over all lesser distinctions, and substituting cordiality and harmony in the place of distrust and opposition. Nor have its effects amongst ourselves been in this respect less distinguished or less honourable. It has raised the character of parliament. Whatever may have been thought or said concerning the unrestrained

prevalency of our political divisions, it has taught surrounding nations, it has taught our admiring country, that there are subjects still beyond the reach of party. There is a point of elevation where we get above the jarring of the discordant elements that ruffle and agitate the vale below. In our ordinary atmosphere, clouds and vapours obscure the air, and we are the sport of a thousand conflicting winds and adverse currents; but here, we move in a higher region, where all is pure, and clear, and serene, free from perturbation and discomposure:

As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm;
Tho' round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Here then, on this august eminence, let us build the temple of benevolence; let us lay its foundation deep in truth and justice, and let the inscription on its gates be "peace and good will towards men." Here let us offer the first fruit of our prosperity; here let us devote ourselves to the service of these wretched men, and go forth burning with a generous ardour to compensate, if possible, for the injuries we have hitherto brought on them. Let us heal the breaches we have made. Let us rejoice in becoming the happy instruments of arresting the progress of rapine and desolation, and of introducing into that immense country the blessings of christianity, the comforts of civilized, and the sweets of social life. I am persuaded, sir, there is no man who hears me who would not join with me in hailing the arrival of this happy period; who does not feel his mind cheered and solaced by the contemplation of these delightful scenes. The first step towards realizing them, must be to agree with me this night in the motion I mean to bring forward.

But it has been sometimes said, these are all idle and illusive expectations; the Africans are unconquerably savage; all attempts to civilize them must be in vain. Whatever I might have thought of the argument itself, I should have given those who urged it, more credit for their sincerity, if I had found them

acting like men who were convinced of its truth: but, surely it argues their distrust of its validity, when you see them not merely abstaining themselves from attempting the civilization of Africa, but, even obstructing and opposing others who are engaged in the prosecution of this benevolent design. It is with shame and humiliation, I remind the committee of the resistance that was made to an honourable friend of mine, when he brought forward a measure for establishing one little settlement in Africa, wherein the natives, secure from the ravages of the slave trade, might cultivate the ground in peace; where we might institute a bloodless traffick in the productions of the soil, instead of this wicked commerce in the flesh and blood of our fellow creatures. How was he thwarted in the exercise of his benevolence? Petitions poured in from the African traders; the whole state of things was changed; and the natives who had been before described as being so insuperably indolent, that it was impossible to prevail on them to work, were now stated to be an industrious people, who furnished the African ships with rice and other provisions in great quantities and at reasonable rates.

But, sir, these inconsistencies and contradictions were not wanted to convince any reasonable man, that there was no foundation for the opinion, that it was impossible to civilize the continent of Africa. After having so long troubled the house, I dare not enter into the wide field it would be necessary for us to investigate, in order to the complete discussion of this argument: I may do it hereafter, if it be required of me; mean while, I will only remark, that there are no instances of barbarism among the Africans, for which we may not find a parallel in the history of our own ancestors. In fact, sir, this argument when traced to its foundation, will be found to bottom on the opinion, that the negroes are not of the human species. This is now, I hope and believe, an exploded idea; but let it never be forgotten, that none was originally contended for with more shameless obstinacy, and I now mention it the rather, because I am

persuaded that the slave trade can find no other resting place. And, give me leave to say, that the advocates for this inhuman traffick, acted more honestly, and fairly, and openly, whilst they took their stand here, than they do now in continuing to contend after they have been forced to abandon the premises. Oh! sir, for their own happiness, it were to have been wished, that these poor creatures had not been possessed of human feelings! but they have shown to the contrary, by ten thousand different proofs. They are confessed to be, in their own country, remarkably hospitable and kind. What do they not feel on being separated from their friends and connexions and native country? Witness their acts of suicide on ship board, and that expedient which is provided in the very construction of a slave ship, to prevent their terminating an existence, become too painful to be endured. Their attachment to their masters, when kindly treated, is acknowledged by our opponents, and a thousand other proofs might be adduced of their possessing all the best feelings of our nature. No, sir, it is we, that must confess ourselves deficient in tenderness. From these despised beings, whom we would degrade to the level of the brute creation, let us discover what it is to have human feelings; let us learn from them the mystery of compassion, and borrow the sympathies of a nature superiour in sensibility to our own.

I must say a word or two concerning the terms of my motion, which differs a little from that of last year. Gentlemen may concur with me in my vote who approve of a bill for deferring the period of abolition. My conviction of the indispensable necessity of immediately stopping this trade, remains however as strong and unshaken as ever; I can admit of no compromise, and will avail myself of any opportunity of at once destroying this system of iniquity. I am sure too, that the immediate abolition of the slave trade is to be justified on the principles of sound policy. Let it not be thought, sir, either of my right honourable

friend,* who sits near me, or of myself, that it was for our own sakes that we went into that minute detail, and those laborious calculations; from a sense of duty we condescended to such ignoble drudgery, but we appealed ourselves to more simple and more exalted principles. Where the commands of justice and humanity are so imperious, I know not how to admit of parley or of compromise. Let those who talk of allowing three or four years to the continuance of the slave trade, think of the disgraceful scenes that passed last year. For myself however, I will wash my hands of the blood that would be spilled in this horrid interval. I will protest against its being granted, as the most flagrant violation of every principle of justice and humanity. I cannot but believe, that the hour is at length come, when we shall put a final period to the existence of this unchristian traffick. But if in this fond expectation I should be unhappily mistaken, be assured, sir, I never will desert the cause; but to the last moment of my life, I will exert my utmost powers in the service of that unhappy country. In truth, if I were not to persevere, I must be dead to every generous emotion that can actuate, and stimulate the mind of man. Can a noble object interest? or the consciousness of an honourable office? What object so noble as this of relieving the miseries of thousands upon thousands of our fellow creatures; introducing christianity and civilization to a fourth part of the habitable globe? I am, indeed, conscious of the honourable nature of the office I have undertaken, and grateful to God for having permitted me to take the lead in the communication of such extended blessings. My task is one in which it is impossible to tire; my work repays itself: it fills my mind with complacency and peace. I lie down with it at night with composure, and rise to it in the morning with alacrity. If it obliges me to be conversant with scenes of wretchedness, this is but like visiting a hospital from motives of humanity, where

* Mr. Pitt.

your own feelings repay you for the pain you undergo. No, sir, no; I never will desist from this blessed work; but I cannot help persuading myself, that there will be no call for my perseverance. I will not allow myself to doubt about the issue, and cheerfully wait the event of your decision.

MR. FOX'S SPEECH,

DELIVERED ON THE SECOND OF APRIL 1792, IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON A MOTION MADE FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

WE are induced to give a place to the speech of Mr. Fox on the abolition of the slave trade, not as a specimen of ornamented eloquence, but with a view of recording the sentiments of an enlightened statesman, strongly and unreservedly expressed on a very momentous subject, and one which hereafter may become peculiarly interesting to the United States.

The opposition of Mr. Fox to this odious traffick was chiefly confined to the grounds of its injustice and cruelty.

Entertaining a deep sense of its unrighteousness, he uniformly contended that no political necessity, or any consideration of private benefit, could justify its continuance for a moment.

Were it practicable, he said, to divest servitude in the colonies of its severities so as to render it a condition superiour to that enjoyed by the Africans in their native state, or by the lower ranks of society in the best portions of Europe, still, as the trade violated their rights, and compelled their submission, it could be sanctioned by no country which properly appreciated its honour, or regarded the maxims of a policy, pure, liberal, and magnanimous.

SPEECH, &c.

SIR,

WE have certainly never heard a more severe or efficacious resistance to the abolition of the slave

trade than has just been made by the speech of the right honourable gentleman.* There is indeed, sir, something so much more mischievous, and something so much more like a foundation contained in the proposition submitted to the house for preserving, not only for years to come, but for aught I know *for ever*, that detestable traffick, that I cannot excuse myself from stating with the utmost plainness the grounds upon which I act in this most important concern. I must, with all the zeal and force of which I am master, deprecate all such deceptions and delusions upon the country. They may not be intentionally such, but I must call every thing deception and delusion, which may prevent the committee from seeing the business in its true light; from seeing what alone is and must be the question: *Whether this execrable slave trade, is fit to be continued, or must be abolished?*

The honourable gentlemen, call themselves *moderate men*,† but upon this subject, I confess, I neither feel, nor desire to feel, any thing like the sentiment of moderation. Sir, to talk of moderation, upon this matter, reminds me of a passage in Middleton's Life of Cicero. He says, "to enter a man's house and kill him, his wife, and family, in the night, is certainly a most heinous crime, and deserving of death. But to break open his house, to murder him, his wife and all his children, in the night, may still be very right, *provided it is done with moderation.*"

This is absurd, it will be said; and yet, sir, it is not so absurd as to say the slave trade may be carried on with moderation. For if you cannot break into a a single house, if you cannot rob and murder a single man, with moderation; with what moderation can you break up a whole country? Can you pillage and

* M. Dundas.

† Refers to the proposition of *gradual* abolition of the trade.

‡ The supporters of the proposition of gradual abolition.

destroy a whole nation? Indeed—indeed, sir, in an affair of this nature, I do not profess moderation! Sir, I never could think of this abolition, but as a question of simple justice. It is only, whether we should authorize by law, respecting Africa, the commision of crimes, for which, in this country, we should incur the severest penalties of the law; and even forfeit our lives in the most ignominious form. Notwithstanding which, the two honourable gentlemen* think it a question to be treated with moderation, pleading that moderation, in arranging this robbery and murder may be very proper and useful.

The last right honourable gentleman, says the slave trade is a question, "he cannot contemplate without horrour;" and yet he will not give a vote for its immediate destruction. The other gentleman says, "he will not vote for its continuance;" but he is not entirely against it. Where is the proof they will *ever* vote for the abolition of it? May they not say the same thing, whenever you come to declare the time when that event is to take place? If they have any arguments to produce for it, provided any arguments can be urged in favour of murder and robbery, let them be brought forward; let them show that that is law which exists in fact in the breach of every law; and let them then explain to us how such enormites can by any manœuvres be rendered fit and proper for the house to continue, for a few years, or even for a few days longer.

I will suppose, if you please, that the West India islands are likely to want slaves, on account of the disproportion of the sexes. How is this to be cured? A right honourable gentleman proposes a bounty on an importation of females: or in other words, he proposes to make up this deficiency, by offering a premium to any crew of unprincipled and savage ruffians, who will attack and carry off any of the females of Africa! *a bounty from the parliament of Britain* that shall make the fortune of any man, or set of men, who

* Mr. Dundas and Mr. Addington.

been compelled to bow under the yoke of servitude for this term of ten or fifteen years, they may then, perhaps, be equally unfit to become free, and therefore may remain slaves, for a great number of years longer, or even for life.

Now, what can be more visionary than such a mode of education for the purpose of emancipation? If any one scheme can be imagined more absurd than another, I think it is the one now proposed.

The honourable gentleman who introduced the motion we are discussing, very properly says, "as this practice, which by a strange perversion of words is called the slave trade, ought, indisputably, to be considered as a most enormous crime, rather than a commerce; it is our duty to prohibit and punish the perpetration of it, even though it should not be in our power effectually to annihilate it." No, says the right honourable gentleman, for though I do not argue, as others have done that because the French, Spaniards and Dutch will do it, that we are thereby justified in taking our share; yet as our colonies will get slaves by the means of these other nations if we abandon it, therefore we had better ourselves afford them the supply.

Now sir, I, on the contrary, have no difficulty in saying, in the first place, that if they are to be supplied, I wish it to be by the French, Spaniards, and Dutch, or any other nation under heaven, rather than by ourselves. But, again; does he think that we have no external power, no authority to prevent the importation of slaves, when he allows us an internal authority; an authority with respect to the education of children, the emancipation of slaves, and the Lord knows what? Sir, the house begins to see that this trade is not consistent with justice, and they feel themselves unhappy at that sight. An honourable gentleman who spoke early in the debate, acknowledged that many enormities were practised in it, and were to be found in the evidence on your table; but, says he, would it be fair to take the character of this country, from the records of the Old Bailey? I do

not at all wonder, sir, that when this subject was mentioned, the Old Bailey naturally occurred to his recollection. The facts which are described, are associated in all our minds with the ideas of criminal justice; but the honourable gentleman forgot the essential difference between the two cases. When we learn from the Old Bailey records that crimes have been committed in this country, we learn at the same moment that they are punished with transportation or death. When we hear of these crimes committed in the slave trade, we find them passed over with impunity; nay, we even see them rewarded, and the perpetrators going out again under the same masters to commit more.

There has been an accusation against the committee which sat in the Old Jewry, for having distributed copies of the evidence. I had the honour of being one of that committee, though, perhaps, from other avocations, not a very constant attendant. My advice was to distribute them as largely as could be done. For I do heartily wish, that there might not be a man in this nation who can read, but should see the evidence before the house. I am confident, sir, it would produce on the country that effect, which I trust it will ultimately upon the house of commons, and ensure an immediate abolition.

In disparagement of some of those who have given their testimony, it is objected to them by one honourable gentleman, that they were, many of them, poor people. Why, sir, if they have poverty, they may have veracity. These two qualities, I hope, are not incompatible. Then he brought against them the evidence of lord Rodney, lord Macartney, admiral Edwards, admiral Arbuthnot, &c. &c. &c. whose characters, as commanders, I revere. But have they said a word about the slave trade? Have they even told you that they have ever seen the coast of Africa? Do they know any thing of the slave trade, except from the same source, which every gentleman in this house has it in his power to resort to; namely, the evidence upon our table? They have spoken of no-

thing but of the West Indies. I am not aware they have had any intelligence from Africa upon the subject. Would it not then be thought a shuffling trick of a counsel, if he were to take the testimony of those men because they are lords or great people, to the disparagement of the evidence of poorer persons, when the testimony of these last is directly to the point in question, and that of the great lords is on a subject altogether separate and distinct. Besides, all that these great men have said, is at best negative, and every thing which has been advanced by the others is positive, and remains uncontradicted.

As to the mode of procuring slaves, even the honourable gentleman near me,* has not ventured to say that it has any thing like fairness in it. I think the least disreputable way of accounting for the supply of slaves, is to represent them as having been convicted of crimes, by legal authority. Now, sir, if the number of them proves, on inquiry, to be such that it is impossible to believe they have been all guilty even of any crime, much less of crimes deserving so great a punishment as perpetual slavery, this pretence sinks into nothing, and the very urging it, only disgraces those who can satisfy themselves with defending a practice so execrable, on grounds so futile, and by a supposition so absurd. What is the whole number of these convicts exported annually from Africa? EIGHTY THOUSAND. But I will grant that it is Britain alone that takes all her convicts, and that the slaves taken by other nations are not convicts, but are carried off by shameful fraud and violence. Britain alone, I will suppose, is so scrupulous, as to receive none that have not legally forfeited their liberty, leaving all the fraud of the slave trade to other countries. Britain, even on this supposition takes off no less than THIRTY or FORTY THOUSAND annually of African convicts! Now, sir, is it credible, is it possible for us to persuade ourselves, that even this number

* Colonel Tarleton.

can have been legally convicted of crimes, for which they have justly forfeited their liberty? The supposition is ridiculous.

But allowing all these men to have been condemned by due legal process, and according to the strictest principles of justice; surely, sir, in this view, it is rather condescending in our country, and rather new also for us, to take on ourselves the task of transporting the convicts of other parts of the world, much more of those whom we call barbarous! Suppose, now, the court of France or Spain were to intimate a wish that we should perform this office for their criminals; I believe we should hardly find terms that could be strong enough to express our sense of the insult. But, for Africa—for its petty states—for its lowest and most miserable criminals, we accept the office with satisfaction and eagerness!

Now, sir, a word or two as to the specifick crimes for which the Africans are sold as criminals. *Witchcraft*, in particular, is one. For this we entertain so sacred a horrour, that there being no objects to be found at home, we make, as if it were, a crusade to Africa, to show our indignation at the sin! As to *adultery*, the practice to be sure, does not stand exactly on the same ground.

Adulterers are to be met with in this country, but then the crime is, I supppse, so common here, that we know not whom to single out for punishment from among the number. Determined, however, to show our indignation of the crime also, we send to Africa to punish it. We there prove our anger at it to be not a little severe; and, lest adulterers should any where in the world escape punishment, we degrade ourselves, even in Africa, to be their executioners.

Thus, sir, we send to Africa to punish witchcraft, because there are no witches to be found here; and we send to the same country to punish adultery, because the adulterers here are too many to incur punishment.

The house will remember too, that what I have here stated is, even by their own account, the very best state of the case which the advocates for the slave trade have pretended to set up.

But let us now see how far facts will bear them out, even in these miserable pretexts. In one part of the evidence, we find a well known black trader brings a girl to a slave ship to be sold. The captain buys her. Some of her relations come on board afterwards, and ascertain by whom she was sold. They, in return, catch the vender, bring him to the same ship, and sell him for a slave. What says the black trader to the captain? "Do you buy *me* your grand trader?" "Yes says the captain, I will buy you or any one else." Now, sir, there is great reason for dwelling on this story. Certainly at the first view, it appears to be an instance of the most barefaced villany, and of nothing else. But if we examine well into the subject, we shall see that what happened in this case is, and ever must be, the common and ordinary conduct, that results from the very nature and circumstances of the trade itself. How could this captain decide? What means had he even of inquiring who was the real owner of this girl? Whether the grand trader or not; or who was the owner of the grand trader? The captain said when they sold the trader, the same thing which he said when the trader sold the girl; and the same thing too, which he always had said, and always must say, namely, "I cannot know who has a right to sell you; it is no affair of mine. If they'll sell you, I'll buy you. I cannot enter into these controversies. If any man offers me a slave, my rule is to buy him, and ask no questions." That the trade is, in fact, carried on in this manner, is indisputable; and that wars are made in Africa, solely for the purpose of supplying the European slave trade, is equally so. *Is there any man that denies it? I do not believe a single gentleman in this committee will now dare to controvert so well established a fact;* and it is for this reason, I shall not mispend your time in adducing additional proof of it.

I will now enter into some particulars relative to what happened in the river Camaroon, already stated to you by an honourable gentleman.* This affair came out upon an action tried before the court of common pleas, on the first of March last, before Lord Loughborough. It was brought by one M'Dowal against Gregson and Co. for wages due to the plaintiff. The facts were directly in issue, so that by this strange concurrence of events, you have what you could hardly have expected, a judicial proof of the whole transaction. A chieftain, of the name of Quarmo, who meant to execute his revenge upon the slave captain for the the savage violence which the captain had before committed, goes to him, and says, "I want to go up the country to make trade, if you will help me by giving me some arms and gunpowder." The proposal is at once accepted. Now, sir, as the chief meant to deceive the captain, when he asked for these arms and gunpowder, we may be very sure he would use just that sort of art, which would be most likely to effect his purpose. He would not make a proposition of any extraordinary kind, which might alarm the captain's suspicions. He would, on the contrary, assign a motive the most usual, and common, and natural he could devise. Hence the plea of borrowing arms to make trade, and the success of the stratagem. It was so much the every day's practice, that the slave captain immediately consented, as it were through habit, to the request, which he tells you himself, he had often granted before; and, by the success of the fraud, his destruction was accomplished. In short, I again and again call on any man to show me how the African trade can be carried on but by such means, that if any one were to practise the same in this country, he would justly be punished with death.

But, sir, we are accused of enthusiasm. Are we then fanaticks? Are we enthusiasts, because we cry do not rob; do not murder! I have ever considered

* Mr. Wilberforce.

this business as a most unjust and horrible persecution of our fellow creatures. But I am told I must be under some impression of enthusiasm. If, by that expression, be meant zeal and warmth, I not only freely acknowledge but glory in it. Enthusiasm, when it arises out of a just cause, is that which makes men act with energy. It is that without which nothing great was ever done since the creation of the world. Enthusiasm, properly directed, I hope therefore I shall always possess. This being as I have said, a cause of justice, it is one in which I cannot admit of any compromise; for there can be none between justice and injustice.

An honourable member has alleged, that it would have been fairer in the gentleman who moved the question, if he had expressed in the terms of it, the full extent of his own meaning. Though the words of the motion do not avow immediate abolition, the mover did, I think, most clearly and openly declare his intention was immediately to abolish. There can be, therefore, no solid objection to it. He has drawn the motion, agreeably to the forms of the house, and with perfect good sense, in my opinion. He says, "when I bring in my bill, I mean to let it be open to amendment." It is, however, reasonable for us to expect, that the honourable gentleman will himself wish to have the blanks filled up in the manner that is most correspondent to the feelings of his own mind upon the subject.

What then is the precise question now before the committee for their consideration? The question, sir, is only "whether this house is ready now to decide that the slave trade shall be abolished, leaving the time unsettled. When we come into the committee on the bill, any honourable gentleman may then move whatever period he may think fit. I say the trade ought to be abolished immediately. Others may think it ought to be posponed two, three, six ten, or twenty years! I own that it appears to me they might as well propose a thousand. But, by this motion as it now stands, they will have an o-

portunity of naming what term they please, and they ought, therefore, to vote now with us, if they mean to abolish at all.

But, mark the conduct of the right honourable gentlemen. Notwithstanding they declare themselves friends to the abolition, they will, by the conduct they seem now about to follow, give additional weight and strength to that majority which decided against the abolition last year. By the course which I propose, they would put an end to that majority. I was in hopes they would have done something, though it should be ever so small, towards forwarding the object: but these hopes entirely fail me.

I have been both sorry and ashamed to hear a right honourable member of so much authority as the gentleman I allude to,* profess to us, that "he had never yet delivered any opinion on this important subject." Surely, sir, when the chair of the committee was filled by the honourable baronet,† who so properly and worthily now occupies it, and when that right honourable member was thereby left at liberty to speak and vote upon the question, the committee had some right to expect the benefit of his judgment and abilities. I suspect the right honourable gentleman himself must have felt humiliated, at having to go uselessly out of the house, or to run behind the chair, without giving any opinion or assistance whatever in the decision of a question of such magnitude; one too, in which the plainest principles of justice, and the dearest rights of humanity are involved.

Another right honourabe gentleman has said, "in a little time we shall find that this trade will be abolished." I believe it. The criminality of it is beginning to be known, and this will abolish it. Petitions have been presented to the house which cannot be resisted; and the publick, who have been enlightened by the evidence and the publications of the

* Mr. Addington, speaker of the house.

† Sir William Dolben.

society in the Old Jewry, have shown a solicitude and zeal on the subject, which cannot fail of accomplishing their object.

Sir, I have been long enough in Parliament to have seen petitions on a variety of occasions presented to the house, and I do not know upon what principle you can speak slightingly of them, as one honourable gentleman* has done, unless you can bring actual evidence of improper practices; unless you can prove for instance, that some names have been forged, or some fraudulent means used to obtain signatures.

The honourable gentleman says he has two letters to show that to some of these petitions there are fictitious names. How does he know the signatures to these letters are not as false as he states the petitions to be? If he can prove the fraud, let it be done. But, sir, it is perfectly ridiculous to suppose that such a number of petitions from all parts of the kingdom could have been fabricated. If they were, why then have we not as many fabricated for the preservation of the trade as for the abolition? "So we might," says the honourable gentleman, "but the people on our side of the question would not condescend to use such means." No, sir, the reason why we have none of their petitions, is that the detection would have been easy; and it must be equally easy if the petitions are mere forgeries on our side of the question. If the honourable gentleman really can find, among all the slave captains whom he knows, none who are equal to such practices as these, I give him joy on his connexions; for he must be allied with very conscientious Guinea captains indeed!

It has been urged that we have no occasion to adopt these violent measures, in order to put an end to the slave trade, for it will soon be suppressed by the gradual civilization of Africa. Sir, it is impossible. As long as this accursed trade exists there can be no civilization. While we continue thus to excite men to war and every species of villany, can

* Colonel Tarleton.

there be any refinement in a country, or any thing that can tend to make its inhabitants happy? Here is the very height of cruelty. We create every kind and degree of immorality. We, ourselves, render the people savages, and then we say, "those men are so savage, that it is bettering their condition to transport them as slaves to the West Indies."

We have heard the miserable heartrending tale of the horrid scenes which have passed in St. Domingo. Doubtless the revolted negroes have there committed devastations and murders, of which the very relation makes a man shudder with horrour. But where did these blacks learn their cruelty? Who instructed them to be brutal and ferocious? They have learnt it, sir, from civilized Europeans, and they have learnt it in the West Indies. They gained their instruction from those who had tyrannized over them, and from their own masters. The oppression practised on themselves was in their remembrance, and we may assure ourselves this has caused them to wreak their vengeance with such fury. Can any man wish our islands to be in a like condition? Would you expose them to similar situations? or would you take the means of preventing it? Stop then the further importation of slaves. Do not add to the number of those slaves in particular, by whom these outrages have been chiefly committed. Even Mr. Long's history of Jamaica points out the probable benefits of such a prohibition. Nor does the good effect of the measure of abolition, even upon our islands, end here. Besides lessening most materially the danger of insurrections like that of St. Domingo, it will lead to a melioration of the condition of the present slaves there, by easy and obvious means; to mild and gentle treatment from their masters, which so far from diminishing, will rather increase their real power and authority. When this happy change of system shall have arrived, you will be able to depend on the Creole blacks for the defence of their country, as much as on the whites themselves.

But, it is asked "why are we to be so very attentive to the inhabitants of Africa, and yet not enter into the question of regulating the present system of slavery in the West Indies? Why are we to be so tender of the African blacks, and yet have no tenderness for those in our own islands?" Sir, I deny that I solicit any tenderness for the people of Africa. I only say, do not rob and murder them to gratify your avarice. Is this asking for tenderness? For the slaves in the West Indies I do confess that I feel very sensibly. The slavery, even of a person bred in it, is much to be pitied. This, however, is far less grievous than the slavery of an imported African. To be the slave of the man that brought him up, and in the same country where he was born, is quite different from a man's being forced from his own country into slavery; torn from his friends, deprived of that freedom which he had long enjoyed, and made to work, contrary to all his former habits, under the whip of a driver, in a new quarter of the globe.

Sir, I now come to that which I consider really as the foundation of the whole business. The more I think on the subject, the more I reflect on all the arguments, feeble as they are, which our adversaries bring forward in their defence, the more am I convinced that there is one ground, and only one ground, on which it is possible for their side of the question to stand. It is an argument which, though they did resort to at first, they have not used to day; but which, really sir, if I were to advise them, they should again employ, and rest their whole case upon it. I mean that there is a difference of species, between black men and white, which is to be assumed from the difference of colour. Driven, as our antagonists have been, from this position, and ashamed of it, as they now are, they really have no other. Why, sir, if we can but establish that blacks are men like ourselves, is it possible that we can have any patience on the subject? Apply the same case to France, which is happening every day in Africa. The difference, in

fact, is only in the colour of the people of the two countries.

There exists now in France, or in several of its provinces, a very great degree of animosity between the two contending parties. I believe, indeed, the accounts are much exaggerated. But let us suppose that at Marseilles, for instance, or some other port, the aristocrats were to sell the democrats as fast as they could catch them; and the democrats were to sell the aristocrats in like manner, and that we had ships hovering on the coast, ready to carry them all off as slaves to Jamaica, or some other island in the West Indies. If we were to hear of such a circumstance, would it not strike us with horrour? What is the reason? Because these men are of our own colour. There is no other difference in the two cases whatever.

I recollect that one of the ancient philosophers, no less a character than Aristotle, wishing to establish some defence of slavery, says "*The barbarians are of a different race from us, and were born to be slaves to the Greeks.*" Now, sir, if any better reason could be found in justification of slavery, I should think that most fertile genius would have been the first to discover it. He saw domestick tyranny exercised in an extreme degree, and this in states where political tyranny was not suffered. He asked himself the reason, and after he had searched his wonderful invention (finding slavery to be the practice of his country, and not wishing to condemn it) he could resort to no other argument than that "the Barbarians are inferiour to the Greeks by nature; and the Greeks have strength to conquer them." It is true many of these Barbarians were of the same colour with the Greeks; still, however, it was necessary to establish a distinction in the nature of the different men, in order to assign any real reason for permitting the difference in their treatment.

As to setting up a distinction of nature between people of our own colour; it is what no one will bear to hear. To say there are any whites of an inferiour

species, marked out by nature to be slaves to other whites, is not to be born. It would fill us all with horrour to authorize slavery any where, on this principle, with respect to white men. Is it not quite as unjust, because some men are black, to say there is a natural distinction as to them; and that black men, because they are black, ought to be slaves? Set aside difference of colour, and is it not the height of arrogance to allege, that because we have strong feelings and cultivated minds, it would be great cruelty to make slaves of us; but that because they are yet ignorant and uncivilized, it is no injury at all to them? Such a principle once admitted, lays the foundation of a tyranny and injustice that have no end.

Mention has been made of some great hardships suffered on board the transports to Botany Bay, by which a large portion of the convicts perished; and I am afraid indeed the business was attended with dreadful circumstances. The story, however, may appear less extraordinary to some of us, when we know that the transportation was undertaken by slave merchants, and conducted by a slave captain. I understand, a part of the misery is attributed to his having used slave fetters, instead of those usually worn by convicts. That any felons should have been conveyed to the place of their banishment under circumstances of equal cruelty with slaves from Africa, is certainly, sir, a disgrace to this country, and it ought to constitute a charge against those persons concerned in so scandalous a business; and I hope and understand it will be so considered by government.

I remember to have once heard, or read, long before the present question was agitated, a well known story of an African, who was of the first rank in his own country and a man of letters. He was taken in one of those plundering wars, which the slave trade excites, was carried to Maryland, and sold as it happened to a remarkably humane and very excellent man. His master inquired into the case, found out that he was educated in the Mahometan religion, that

he could read and write Arabick, that he was a man of rank as well as literature, and all the circumstances being taken into consideration, he was after a full examination of facts, redeemed and sent home to Africa. Now, sir, if this man with all his advantages had fallen into the hands, I do not say of a hard hearted, but even an ordinary master, would he not inevitably have worn out his life in the same Egyptian bondage, in which thousands of his fellow Africans drag on their miserable days? Put such cases as these home to yourselves, and you will find the slave trade is not to be justified, nor to be tolerated for a moment, for the sake of any convenience.

As to danger from the want of population in the islands, even this pretext has been completely done away by the right honourable the chancellor of the exchequer. And it is remarkable, that though he was at the pains of going fully into those calculations, insomuch, that I really thought him too condescending in the detail, there has not been the least attempt to controvert any of his statements. Not a single calculation of his has been entered into by any one who is against the abolition of the trade.

Upon the whole, I shall give my opinion of this traffick in a very few words. I believe it to be impolitick; I know it to be inhuman; I am certain it is unjust. I think it so inhuman, that, if the plantations could not be cultivated without it, upon the principles of humanity and justice, they ought not to be carried on at all. Even if the objects of it were brute animals, no humane man could expose them to be treated with such wanton cruelty. If the merchandize were totally inanimate, no honest man could support a trade founded upon such principles of injustice and cruelty. Upon these grounds, there is every necessity for putting an immediate end to it.

I think the honourable gentleman has made precisely the most proper motion in this stage of the business. It confines the house to nothing, provided they are friends to the abolition, either immediate or future. He has told you his ideas, and those who

differ from him as to time, may propose their's. Let us rescue parliament from the degrading situation in which it stands at present, of having given its sanction to this trade. Many gentlemen feel the burthen, and are desirous of being relieved from it. Let us do our duty, and remove this opprobrium from ourselves; and if other countries follow our example, so much the better. If they do not, let us glory in leaving them behind. Let us show them that Great Britain deserves to stand as high in the opinion of the world for her justice and clemency as I know she does already for her wisdom, and the superiority of her constitution, and the excellency of her laws. But, sir, I can have no doubt, that the example which we shall set in abolishing the slave trade will have a great effect, certainly greater than that of any other country in Europe. What is the present situation of France with respect to her colonies? It is critical and peculiar. One day they talk of liberty and are inclined to favour the negroes; another day they check themselves and suspend their measures. It is the timid wavering conduct which the national assembly was prevailed on to adopt, in preference to bold and resolute measures, that has produced all the dreadful mischiefs at St. Domingo.

These, sir, are the cruel consequences of moderate measures. Decision had been mercy; decision even against the prejudice of their West India planters, would have been a thousand times better for those planters, than irresolution and half measures.

But there are some persons who are fond of throwing out, that our islands will not submit to the abolition of the slave trade; that they will say, "We cannot, we will not suffer it, and we must seek out some other connexion." To this, I very freely answer, "If you chuse to be protected by us, who are best able to do it, we will protect you, and we know we can render you more service than any other country; but if you are to be connected with us, *it must be on the principles of justice*. If Britain must involve herself in this dishonourable, this bloody business, for

the sake of the islands; if these are your terms, let the connexion cease from this moment.

Perhaps, sir, there is less boldness than there appears to be in stating this so strongly, for I am well persuaded, that our West India islands are too well aware of the superiour advantages of their present connexion, to break with us. I am convinced they will say to us, "Though you abolish the slave trade, you shall not drive us away from you: to you we must still adhere, our habits, our feelings, and what is more, our interests, incline us to prefer your connexion to that of any other country. But if they should not say this, and if the question be, whether Britain shall retain the slave trade and the West India Islands, or shall part with them both together, I do not hesitate a moment in deciding which alternative she ought to take. I declare at once, "*Better be without the islands than not abolish the slave trade.*" Let us, therefore, to night, act the part which will do us honour; let us vote for bringing in a bill for the abolition. If we fail, which I confess I have some apprehension of, I have only to express my gratitude to the honourable gentleman for the part he has taken. He does not need my exhortation to persist. But I declare, that whether we vote in a small minority or a large one, "*We never will give up the point.*" Whether in this house, or out of this house; in whatsoever situation I may ever be; as long as I have a voice to speak, *this question shall never be at an end.* If it were possible that the honourable gentleman could entertain the idea of abandoning it, I would not.

But sir, even if all those who are engaged in this question were to be removed away, there would never be wanting men alive to their duty who would cry out for justice, who would maintain a perpetual struggle till this trade should be suppressed.

We who think that these things are not merely impolitick, but inhuman and unjust; that they are not of the nature of trade, but that they are crimes and pollutions, which stain the honour of a country, will never relax our efforts.

We wish to prevent man from preying upon man; and we must do our duty, let the world think of us as it may. I possess the fullest confidence that our perseverance will ensure success.

One word more. Let not this subject be confounded with any ideas of political slavery. Were I a member of an arbitrary government, where the will of the prince alone was law, I should be as zealous to wipe off such a stain from that country, as I now am to do it from our own. What means slavery? A slave is one whom another man commands at his pleasure; who belongs not to himself, but to his master, at whose disposal he is in all respects. This is personal slavery. Political slavery is but a metaphor. It has got the name from its bearing only some faint resemblance to slavery, literally so called. It has been named political slavery, with a view of exciting somewhat of that same horrour against it, which personal slavery is known always to excite. Few men, I believe, carry their notions of political freedom higher than I do; but though I cannot help thinking the people of France under the old despotick government were enslaved in one sense; yet their state when compared with personal slavery, was a condition of perfect freedom. Nor is the difference between any two, the most distant degrees of political slavery and freedom, to be put in competition with the distinction between every individual slave and free man. Never again, therefore, let our understandings be insulted by confounding two things so totally unlike.

I have not read to the house this night, any of those shocking accounts with which I troubled it last year. But I repeat, "They are upon evidence! they stand on unquestionable authority!"

But neither are these stories necessary to my argument. If the situation of the negroes were as happy as servitude could make them, I must not commit the enormous crime of selling man to man; nor permit a practice to continue which puts an entire bar to the civilization of one whole quarter of the habitable

globe. Many years will not be given us to discuss this subject. This nation will not long permit the constant commission of crimes that shock human nature, for the sake of the West Indies. If the West India gentlemen will insist on the continuance of such a trade, they must not expect to be very popular in England. They have *no right* to demand that crimes shall be permitted by this country for their advantage. The advice, therefore, I give them is, that they should relinquish these ideas, and lend their cordial assistance to such measures as may bring about, in the shortest possible time, an abolition of a traffick, for which not one reason can be given, that is consistent WITH POLICY, HUMANITY, OR JUSTICE.

MR. PITTS'S SPEECH,

DELIVERED ON THE SECOND OF APRIL 1792, IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON A MOTION FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

MR PITT was the last speaker in this very interesting debate. Feeling more than usual ardour, from the vehement resistance the motion for abolishing the slave trade had received, he came forward and delivered a speech, which, after noticing and confuting all the objections that had been previously urged against the proposition, proceeds in tones of the most indignant and sublime eloquence to expose the enormities of this complicated system of moral turpitude, and national infamy.

SPEECH, &c.

MR. SPEAKER,

AT this hour of the morning* I am afraid, sir, I am too much exhausted to enter so fully into the subject before the committee as I could wish; but if my bodily strength is in any degree equal to the task, I feel so strongly the magnitude of this question, that I am extremely earnest to deliver my sentiments, which I rise to do with more satisfaction, because I

* Four o'clock.

now look forward to the issue of this business with considerable hopes of success.

The debate has this night taken a turn, which, though it has produced a variety of new suggestions, has upon the whole, contracted this question into a much narrower point than it was ever brought into before.

I cannot say that I quite agree with the right honourable gentleman over the way.* For I am far from deploring all that has been said by my two honourable friends.† I rather rejoice that they have now brought this subject to a fair issue, that something, at least, is already gained, and that the question has taken altogether a new course this night. It is true, a difference of opinion has been stated, and has been urged with all the force of argument that could be given to it. But permit me to say, that this difference has been urged upon principles very far removed from those which were maintained by the opponents of my honourable friend when he first brought forward his motion.‡ There are very few of those who have spoken this night, who have not thought it their duty to declare their full and entire concurrence with my honourable friend in promoting the abolition of the slave trade, as their ultimate object. However we may differ as to the time and manner of it, we are agreed in the abolition itself; and my honourable friends have expressed their agreement in this sentiment with that sensibility upon the subject, which humanity does most undoubtedly require. I do not, however, think they yet perceive what are the necessary consequences of their own concession, or follow up their own principles to their just conclusion.

The point now in dispute between us is a difference merely as to the period of time, at which the abolition of the slave trade ought to take place. I therefore congratulate this house, the country, and the world, that this great point is gained. That we

* Mr. Fox. † Mr. Dundas and Addington.

‡ Mr. Wilberforce.

may now consider this trade as having received its condemnation; that its sentence is sealed; that this curse of mankind is seen by the house in its true light; and that the greatest stigma on our national character which ever yet existed, is about to be removed; and, sir, which is still more important, that *mankind*, I trust, in general, are now likely to be delivered from the greatest practical evil that ever has afflicted the human race; from the severest and most extensive calamity recorded in the history of the world!

In proceeding to give my reasons for concurring with my honourable friend in his motion, I shall necessarily advert to those topicks which my honourable friends near me have touched upon; and which they stated to be their motives for preferring a gradual, and in some degree a distant abolition of the slave trade, to the more immediate and direct measure now proposed to you. Beginning as I do, with declaring that in this respect I differ completely from my right honourable friends near me, I do not, however, mean to say, that I differ as to one observation which has been pressed rather strongly by them. If they can show that their proposition of a gradual abolition is more likely than ours to secure the object which we have in view; that by proceeding gradually we shall arrive more speedily at our end, and attain it with more certainty, than by a direct vote immediately to abolish; if they can show to the satisfaction both of myself and the committee, that our proposition has more the appearance of a speedy abolition, than the reality of it; undoubtedly they will in this case make a convert of me, and my honourable friend who moved the question. They will make a convert of every man among us, who looks to this, which I trust we all do, as a question not to be determined by theoretical principles or enthusiastick feelings, but considers the practicability of the measure, aiming simply to effect his object in the shortest time, and in the surest possible manner.

If, however, I shall be able to show that our measure proceeds more directly to its object, and secures

it with more certainty, and within a less distant period; and that the slave trade will on our plan be abolished sooner than on theirs; may I not then hope, that my right honourable friends will be as ready to adopt our proposition, as we should in the other case be willing to accede to theirs?

One of my right honourable friends has stated, that an act passed here for the abolition of the slave trade, would not secure its abolition. Now, sir, I should be glad to know, why an act of the British legislature, enforced by all those sanctions which we have undoubtedly the power and the right to apply, is not to be effectual; at least, as to every material purpose? Will not the executive power have the same appointment of the officers and the courts of judicature, by which all the causes relating to this subject must be tried, that it has in other cases? Will there not be the same system of law by which we now maintain a monopoly of commerce? If the same law, sir, be applied to the prohibition of the slave trade, which is applied in the case of other contraband commerce, with all the same means of the country to back it, I am at a loss to know why the actual and total abolition is not as likely to be be effected in this way, as by any plan or project of my honourable friends, for bringing about a gradual termination of it. But my observation is extremely fortified by what fell from my honourable friend who spoke last. He has told you, sir, that if you will have patience with it for a few years, the slave trade must drop of itself, from the increasing dearness of the commodity imported, and the increasing progress, on the other hand, of internal population. Is it true, then, that the importations are so expensive and disadvantageous already, that the internal population is even now becoming a cheaper resource? I ask then, if you leave to the importer no means of importation but by smuggling, and if, besides all the present disadvantages, you load him with all the charges and hazards of the smuggler, by taking care that the laws against smuggling are in this case watchfully and rigorously enforced, is there any danger of any consi-

derable supply of fresh slaves being poured into the islands through this channel? And is there any real ground of fear, because a few slaves may have been smuggled in or out of the islands, that a bill will be useless and ineffectual on any such ground? The question under these circumstances will not bear a dispute.

Perhaps, however, my honourable friends may take up another ground, and say: "It is true your "measure would shut out further importations more "immediately; but we do not mean to shut them out "immediately. We think it right, on grounds of "general expediency, that they should not be imme-"diately shut out." Let us therefore now come to this question of the expediency of making the abolition distant and gradual, rather than immediate.

The argument of expediency in my opinion, like every other argument in this disquisition, will not justify the continuance of the slave trade for one unnecessary hour. Supposing it to be in our power, which I have shown it is, to enforce the prohibition from this present time, the expediency of doing it is to me so clear, that if I went on this principle alone I should not feel a moment's hesitation. What is the argument of expediency stated on the other side? It is doubted whether the deaths and births in the islands are as yet so nearly equal as to ensure the keeping up a sufficient stock of labourers: in answer to this I took the liberty of mentioning in a former year, what appeared to me to be the state of population at that time. My observations were taken from documents which we have reason to judge authentick, and which carried on the face of them the conclusions I then stated: they were the clear, simple, and obvious result of a careful examination which I made into this subject, and any gentleman who will take the same pains may arrive at the same degree of satisfaction.

These calculations, however, applied to a period of time that is now four or five years past. The births were then, in the general view of them, nearly equal to the deaths; and, as the state of population

was shown, by a considerable retrospect, to be regularly increasing, an excess of births must before this time have taken place.

Another observation has been made as to the disproportion of the sexes. This, however, is a disparity which existed in any material degree only in former years; it is a disparity of which the slave trade has been itself the cause; which will gradually diminish as the slave trade diminishes, and must entirely cease, if the trade shall be abolished; but which, nevertheless, is made the very plea for its continuance. I believe this disproportion of the sexes, taking the whole number in the islands, Creole as well as imported Africans, the latter of whom occasion all the disproportion, is not now by any means considerable.

But, sir, I also showed, that the great mortality, which turned the balance so as to make the deaths appear more numerous than the births, arose too from the imported Africans, who die in extraordinary numbers in the seasoning. If, therefore, the importation of negroes should cease, every one of the causes of mortality, which I have now stated, would cease also. Nor can I conceive any reason why the present number of labourers should not maintain itself in the West Indies, except it be from some artificial cause, some fault in the islands: such as the impolicy of their governours, or the cruelty of the managers and officers, whom they employ.

I will not reiterate all that I said at that time, or go through island by island. It is true, there is a difference in the ceded islands; and I state them possibly to be, in some respects, an excepted case. But, we are not now to enter into the subject of the mortality in clearing new lands. It is, sir, undoubtedly another question: the mortality here is tenfold. Neither is it to be considered, as the carrying on, but as the setting on foot a slave trade for the purpose of peopling the colony; a measure which I think will not now be maintained. I therefore desire gentlemen to tell me fairly, whether the period they look to is not now arrived? Whether, at this hour, the West Indies

may not be declared to have actually attained a state in which they can maintain their population? and upon the answer I must necessarily receive, I think I could safely rest the whole of the question.

One honourable gentleman has rather ingeniously observed, that one or other of these two assertions of ours must necessarily be false: that either the population must be decreasing, which we deny; or, if the population is increasing, that the slaves must be perfectly well treated (this being the cause of such population) which we deny also. That the population is rather increasing than otherwise; and also that the general treatment is by no means so good as it ought to be, are both points which have been separately proved by different evidences; nor are these two points so entirely incompatible. The ill treatment must be very great indeed, in order to diminish materially the population of any race of people. That it is not so extremely great as to do this, I will admit. I will even admit, if you please, that this charge may possibly have been sometimes exaggerated; and I certainly think, that it applies less and less as we come nearer to the present times.

But, let us see how this contradiction of ours, as it is thought, really stands, and how the explanation of it will completely settle our minds, on the point in question. Do the slaves diminish in numbers? It can be nothing but ill treatment that causes the diminution. This ill treatment the abolition must and will restrain. In this case, therefore, we ought to vote for the abolition. On the other hand, do you choose to say that the slaves clearly increase in numbers? Then you want no importations, and, in this case also, you may safely vote for the abolition. Or, if you choose to say, as the third and only other case which can be put, and which perhaps is the nearest to the truth, that the population is nearly stationary, and the treatment neither so bad nor so good as it might be; then surely, sir, it will not be denied, that this of all others, is on each of the two grounds, the proper period for stopping further supplies: for

your population, which you own is already stationary, will thus be made undoubtedly to increase from the births; and the good treatment of your present slaves, which I am now supposing is but very moderate, will be necessarily improved also by the same measure of abolition. I say, therefore, that these propositions, contradictory as they may be represented, are in truth not at all inconsistent, but even come in aid of each other, and lead to a conclusion that is decisive. And let it be always remembered, that in this branch of my argument, I have only in view the well-being of the West Indies, and do not now ground any thing on the African part of the question.

But, sir, I may carry these observations respecting the islands much further. It is within the power of the colonists, and it is then their indispensable duty, to apply themselves to the correction of those various abuses, by which population is restrained. The most important consequences may be expected to attend colonial regulations for this purpose. With the improvement of internal population, the condition of every negro will improve also; his liberty will advance, or at least he will be approaching to a state of liberty. Nor can you increase the happiness, or extend the freedom of the negro, without adding in an equal degree to the safety of the islands, and of all their inhabitants. Thus, sir, in the place of slaves, who naturally have an interest directly opposite to that of their masters, and are therefore viewed by them with an eye of constant suspicion, you will create a body of valuable citizens and subjects, forming a part of the same community, having a common interest with their superiours, in the security and prosperity of the whole.

And, here let me add, that in proportion as you increase the happiness of these unfortunate beings, you will undoubtedly increase in effect the quantity of their labour also. Gentlemen, talk of the diminution of the labour of the islands! I will venture to assert, that, even if in consequence of the abolition there were to be some decrease in the number of

hands, the quantity of work done, supposing the condition of the slaves to improve, would by no means diminish in the same proportion; perhaps would be far from diminishing at all. For if you restore to this degraded race the true feelings of men; if you take them out from among the order of brutes, and place them on a level with the rest of the human species; they will then work with that energy which is natural to men, and their labour will be productive, in a thousand ways, above what it has yet been; as the labour of a man is always more productive than that of a mere brute.

It generally happens, that in every bad cause some information arises out of the evidence of its defenders themselves, which serves to expose in one part or other the weakness of their defence. It is the characteristick of such a cause, that if it be at all gone into, even by its own supporters, it is liable to be ruined by the contradictions in which those who maintained it are forever involved.

The committee of the privy council of Great Britain sent over certain queries to the West India islands, with a view of elucidating the present subject; and they particularly inquired, whether the negroes had any days or hours allotted to them, in which they might work for themselves. The assemblies in their answers, with an air of great satisfaction state the labour of the slaves to be moderate, and the West India system to be well calculated to promote the domestick happiness of the slaves. They add, "that proprietors are not compelled by law to allow their slaves any part of the six working days of the week for themselves, but that it is the general practice to allow them one afternoon in every week out of crop time; which, with such hours as they choose to work on Sundays, is time amply sufficient for their own purposes." Now, therefore, will the negroes, or I may rather say, do the negroes work for their own emolument? I beg the committee's attention to this point. The assembly of Grenada proceeds to state; I have their own words for it, "That though the ne-

groes are allowed the afternoons of only one day in every week, they will do as much work in that afternoon, when employed for their own benefit, as in the whole day when employed in their master's service."

Now, sir, I will desire you to burn all my calculations; to disbelieve, if you please, every word I have said on the present state of population; nay, I will admit, for the sake of argument, that the numbers are decreasing, and the productive labour at present insufficient for the cultivation of those countries; and I will then ask, whether the increase in the quantity of labour which is reasonably to be expected from the improved condition of the slaves, is not by the admission of the islands themselves, by their admission not merely of an argument but a fact, far more than sufficient to counterbalance any decrease which can be rationally apprehended from a defective state of their population? Why, sir, a negro if he works for himself, and not for a master, will do double work! This is their own account. If you will believe the planters, if you will believe the legislature of the islands, the productive labour of the colonies would, in case the negroes worked as free labourers instead of slaves, be literally doubled. Half the present labourers on this supposition would suffice, for the whole cultivation of our islands on the present scale. I therefore, confidently ask the house, whether in considering the whole of this question, we may not fairly look forward to an improvement in the condition of these unhappy and degraded beings; not only as an event desirable on the ground of humanity and political prudence; but also as a means of increasing, very considerably indeed, even without any increasing population, the productive industry of the islands?

When gentlemen are so nicely balancing the past and future means of cultivating the plantations, let me request them to put this argument into the scale; and the more they consider it, the more will they be satisfied, that both the solidity of the principle which I have stated, and the fact which I have just quoted,

in the very words of the colonial legislature, will bear me out in every inference I have drawn. I think they will perceive also, that it is the undeniable duty of this house, on the grounds of true policy, immediately to sanction and carry into effect that system which ensures these important advantages; in addition to all those other inestimable blessings which follow in their train.

If, therefore, the argument of expediency as applying to the West India islands, is the test by which this question is to be tried, I trust I have now established this proposition, namely, that whatever tends most speedily and effectually to meliorate the condition of the slaves, is, undoubtedly on the ground of expediency, leaving justice out of the question, the main object to be pursued.

That the immediate abolition of the slave trade will most eminently have this effect, and that it is the only measure from which this effect can in any considerable degree be expected, are points to which I shall presently come; but before I enter upon them, let me notice one or two further circumstances.

We are told, and by respectable and well informed persons, that the purchase of new negroes has been injurious instead of profitable to the planters themselves; so large a proportion of these unhappy wretches being found to perish in the seasoning. Writers well versed in this subject have even advised that, in order to remove the temptation which the slave trade offers to expend large sums in this injudicious way, the door of importation should be shut. This very plan we now propose, the mischief of which is represented to be so great as to outweigh so many other momentous considerations, has actually been recommended by some of the best authorities, as one highly requisite to be adopted on the very principle of advantage to the islands; not merely on that principle of general and political advantage on which I have already touched, but for the advantage of the very individuals who would otherwise be most forward in purchasing slaves. On the part of the West Indians it is

urged, " the planters are in debt: they are already distressed; if you stop the slave trade, they will be ruined." Mr. Long, the celebrated historian of Jamaica, recommends the stopping of importations, as a receipt for enabling the plantations which are embarrassed to get out of debt. I will quote his words. Speaking of the usurious terms on which money is often borrowed for the purchase of fresh slaves, he advises " the laying a duty equal to a prohibition on all negroes imported for the space of four or five years, except for reexportation." " Such a law," he proceeds to say, " would be attended with the following good consequences. It would put an immediate stop to these extortions. It would enable the planter to retrieve his affairs by preventing him from running in debt, either by renting or purchasing of negroes. It would render such recruits less necessary, by the redoubled care he would be obliged to take of his present stock, the preservation of their lives and health. And lastly, it would raise the value of negroes in the island. *A North American Province, by this prohibition alone for a few years, from being deeply plunged in debt, has become independent, rich, and flourishing.*"

On this authority of Mr. Long I rest the question, whether the prohibition of further importations is that rash, impolitick, and completely ruinous measure, which it is so confidently declared to be with respect to our West Indian plantations.

I do not however mean in thus treating this branch of the subject, absolutely to exclude the question of indemnification on the supposition of possible disadvantages affecting the West Indies through the abolition of the slave trade. But when genlemen set up a claim of compensation merely on those general allegations, which are all that I have yet heard from them, I can only answer, let them produce their case in a distinct and specifick form; and if upon any practicable or reasonable grounds it shall claim consideration, it will then be time enough for parliament to decide upon it.

I now come to another circumstance of great weight, connected with this part of the question. I mean the danger to which the islands are exposed from those negroes who are newly imported. This, sir, like the observation which I lately made, is no mere speculation of ours; for here again I refer you to Mr. Long, the Historian of Jamaica. He treats particularly of the dangers to be dreaded from the introduction of Coromantine negroes; an appellation under which are comprised several descriptions of negroes obtained on the Gold Coast, whose native country is not exactly known, and who are purchased in a variety of markets, having been brought from some distance inland. With a view of preventing insurrections, he advises, that "by laying a duty equal to a prohibition, no more of these Coromantines should be bought;" and after noticing one insurrection which happened through their means, he tells you of another in the following year, in which thirty-three Coromantines, most of whom had been newly imported, suddenly rose, and in the space of an hour murdered and wounded no less than nineteen white persons."

To the authority of Mr. Long, both in this and other parts of his work, I may add the recorded opinion of the committee of the house of assembly of Jamaica itself; who, in consequence of a rebellion among the slaves, were appointed to inquire into the best means of preventing future insurrections. The committee reported, "That the rebellion had originated (like most or all others) with the Coromantines; and they proposed that a bill should be brought in "for laying a higher duty on the importation of these particular negroes," which was intended to operate as a prohibition.

But the danger is not confined to the importation of Coromantines. Mr. Long, carefully investigating as he does the causes of such frequent insurrections, particularly at Jamaica, accounts for them from the greatness of its general importations. "In two years and a half," says he, "twenty-seven thousand negroes have been imported."—"No wonder we have

rebellions! Twenty-seven thousand in two years and a half!" Why, sir, I believe that in some late years there have been as many imported into the same island within the same period! Surely, sir, when gentlemen talk so vehemently of the safety of the islands, and charge us with being so indifferent to it; when they speak of the calamities of St. Domingo, and of similar dangers impending over their own heads at the present hour, it ill becomes them to be the persons who are crying out for further importations. It ill becomes them to charge upon us the crime of stirring up insurrections—upon us who are only adopting the very principles, which Mr. Long—which in part even the legislature of Jamaica itself, laid down in the time of danger, with an avowed view to the prevention of any such calamity.

The house, I am sure will easily belive it is no small satisfaction to me, that among the many arguments for prohibiting the slave trade which crowd upon my mind, the security of our West India possessions against internal commotions, as well as foreign enemies, is among the most prominent and most forcible. And here let me apply to my two right honourable friends, and ask them, whether in this part of the argument they do not see reason for immediate abolition? Why should you any longer import into those countries that which is the very seed of insurrection and rebellion? Why should you persist in introducing those latent principles of conflagration, which if they should once burst forth, may annihilate in a single day the industry of a hundred years? Why will you subject yourselves, with open eyes, to the evident and imminent risk of a calamity, which may throw you back a whole century in your profits, in your cultivation, in your progress to the emancipation of your slaves; and disappointing at once every one of these golden expectations, may retard, not only the accomplishment of that happy system which I have attempted to describe, but may cut off even your opportunity of taking any one introductory step? Let us begin from this time! Let us not commit

these important interests to any further hazard! Let us prosecute this great object from this very hour! Let us vote that the abolition of the slave trade shall be immediate, and not left to I know not what future time or contingency! Will my right honourable friends answer for the safety of the islands during any imaginable intervening period? Or do they think that any little advantages of the kind which they state, can have any weight in that scale of expediency in which this great question ought undoubtedly to be tried.

Thus stated, and thus alone, sir, can it be truly stated, to what does the whole of my right honourable friend's arguments, on the head of expediency, amount? It amounts but to this: The colonies on the one hand would have to struggle with some few difficulties and disadvantages at the first, for the sake of obtaining on the other hand immediate security to their leading interests; of ensuring, sir, even their own political existence; and for the sake also of immediately commencing that system of progressive improvement in the condition of the slaves, which is necessary to raise them from the state of brutes to that of rational beings, but which never can begin until the introduction of these new disaffected and dangerous Africans into the same gangs, shall have been stopped.

If any argument can in the slighest degree justify the severity that is now so generally practised in the treatment of the slaves, it must be the introduction of these Africans. It is the introduction of these Africans that renders all idea of emancipation for the present so chimerical; and the very mention of it so dreadful. It is the introduction of these Africans that keeps down the condition of all plantation negroes. Whatever system of treatment is deemed necessary by the planters to be adopted towards these new Africans, extends itself to the other slaves also; instead, therefore, of deferring the hour when you will finally put an end to importations, vainly purposing that the condition of your present slaves should pre-

viously be mended, you must, in the very first instance, stop your importations, if you hope to introduce any rational or practicable plan, either of gradual emancipation, or present general improvement.

Being now done with this question of expediency as affecting the islands, I come next to a proposition advanced by my right honourable friend,* which appeared to intimate, that on account of some patrimonial rights of the West Indians, the prohibition of the slave trade might be considered as an invasion of their legal inheritance.

Now, in answer to this proposition, I must make two or three remarks, which I think my right honourable friend will find some considerable difficulty in answering.

First, I observe that his argument, if it be worth any thing, applies just as much to gradual as immediate abolition. I have no doubt, that at whatever period he might be disposed to say the abolition should actually take place, this defence will equally be set up; for it certainly is just as good an argument against an abolition seven, or seventy years hence, as against an abolition at this moment. It supposes we have no right whatever to stop the importations; and even though the injury to our plantations, which some gentlemen suppose to attend the measure of immediate abolition, should be admitted gradually to lessen by the lapse of a few years, yet in point of principle, the absence of all right of interference would remain the same. My right honourable friend, therefore, I am sure will not press an argument not less hostile to his proposition than to ours. But let us investigate the foundation of this objection, and I will commence what I have to say, by putting a question to my right honourable friend. It is chiefly on the presumed ground of our being bound by a parliamentary sanction heretofore given to the African slave trade, that this argument against the abolition is rested. Does then my right honourable friend, or does any man in

* Mr. Dundas.

this house think, that the slave trade has received any such parliamentary sanction, as must place it more out of the jurisdiction of the legislature for ever after, than the other branches of our national commerce? I ask, is there any one regulation of any part of our commerce, which, if this argument be valid, may not equally be objected to, on the ground of its affecting some man's patrimony, some man's property, or some man's expectations? Let it never be forgotten that the argument I am canvassing would be just as strong, if the possession affected were small, and the possessors humble. For on every principle of justice, the property of any single individual, or small number of individuals is as sacred, as that of the great body of West Indians. Justice ought to extend her protection with rigid impartiality to the rich and to the poor, to the powerful and to the humble. If this be the case, in what a situation does my right honourable friend's argument place the legislature of Britain? What room is left for their interference in the regulation of any part of our commerce? It is scarcely possible to lay a duty on any one article, which may not, when first imposed, be said in some way to affect the property of individuals, and even of some entire classes of the community. If the laws respecting the slave trade imply a contract for its perpetual continuance, I will venture to say, there does not pass a year without some act, equally pledging the faith of parliament to the perpetuating of some other branch of commerce. In short, I repeat my observation, that no new tax can be imposed, much less can any prohibitory duty be ever laid on any branch of trade, that has before been regulated by parliament, if this principle be once admitted.

Before I refer to the acts of parliament by which the publick faith is said to be pledged, let me remark also, that a contract for the continuance of the slave trade, must on the principles which I shall presently insist on, have been void, even from the beginning; for if this trade is an outrage upon justice, and only another name for fraud, robbery, and murder, will

any man urge that the legislature could possibly by any pledge whatever incur the obligation of being an accessary, or I may even say, a principal in the commission of such enormities, by sanctioning their continuance? As well might an individual think himself bound by a promise to commit an assassination. I am confident, gentlemen must see, that our proceeding on such grounds, would infringe all the principles of law, and subvert the very foundation of morality.

Let us now see, how far the acts themselves show that there is that sort of parliamentary pledge to continue the African slave trade. The Act of 23 Geo. II. C. 31, is that by which we are supposed to be bound up by contract to sanction all those horrours now so incontrovertibly proved. How surprised then, sir, must the house be to find, that by a clause of their very act, some of these outrages are expressly forbidden! It says: "No commander, or master of a ship trading to Africa, shall by fraud, force, or violence, or by any indirect practice whatsoever, take on board or carry away from the coast of Africa, any negro, or native of the said country, or commit any violence on the natives, to the prejudice of the said trade, and that every person so offending, shall for every such offence forfeit"—When it comes to the penalty, sorry am I to say, that we see too close a resemblance to the West India law, which inflicts the payment of 30l. as the punishment for murdering a negro. The price of blood in Africa is 100l. but even this penalty is enough to prove that the act at least does not sanction, much less does it engage to perpetuate enormities; and the whole trade has now been demonstrated to be a mass, a system of enormities; of enormities which incontrovertibly bid defiance not only to this clause, but to every regulation which our ingenuity can devise, and our power carry into effect. Nothing can accomplish the object of this clause but an extinction of the trade itself.

But, sir, let us see what was the motive for carrying on the trade at all? The preamble of the act states it: "Whereas the trade to and from Africa is very advan-

tageous to Great Britain, and necessary for the supplying the plantations and colonies thereunto belonging with a sufficient number of negroes at reasonable rates, and for that purpose the said trade should be carried on," &c.—Here then we see what the parliament had in view when it passed this act; and I have clearly shown that not one of the occasions on which it grounded its proceedings now exists. I may then plead, I think, the very act itself as an argument for the abolition. If it is shown, that instead of being "very advantageous," to Great Britain, this trade is the most destructive that can well be imagined to her interests; that it is the ruin of our seamen; that it stops the extension of our manufactures; if it is proved in the second place that it is not now necessary for the "supplying our plantations with negroes;" if it is further established that this traffick was from the very beginning contrary to the first principles of justice, and consequently that a pledge for its continuance, had one been attempted to be given, must have been completely and absolutely void; where then in this act of parliament is the contract to be found, by which Britain is bound, as she is said to be, never to listen to her own true interests, and to the cries of the natives of Africa? Is it not clear that all argument, founded on the supposed pledged faith of parliament, makes against those who employ it? I refer you to the principles which obtain in other cases. Every trade act shows undoubtedly that the legislature is used to pay a tender regard to all classes of the community. But if for the sake of moral duty, of national honour, or even of great political advantage, it is thought right, by authority of parliament, to alter any long established system, parliament is competent to do it. The legislature will undoubtedly be careful to subject individuals to as little inconvenience as possible; and if any peculiar hardship should arise, that can be distinctly stated, and fairly pleaded, there will ever, I am sure, be a liberal feeling towards them in the legislature of this country, which is the guardian of all who live under its protection. On the present

occasion, the most powerful considerations call upon us to abolish the slave trade; and if we refuse to attend to them on the alleged ground of pledged faith and contract, we shall depart as widely from the practice of parliament, as from the path of moral duty. If indeed there is any case of hardship, which comes within the proper cognizance of parliament, and calls for the exercise of its liberality—well! But such a case must be reserved for calm consideration, as a matter distinct from the present question.

I beg pardon for dwelling so long on the argument of expediency, and on the manner in which it affects the West Indies. I have been carried away by my own feelings on some of these points into a greater length than I intended, especially considering how fully the subject has been already argued. The result of all I have said, is, that there exists no impediment, no obstacle, no shadow of reasonable objection on the ground of pledged faith, or even on that of national expediency, to the abolition of this trade. On the contrary, all the arguments drawn from those sources plead for it, and they plead much more loudly, and much more strongly in every part of the question, for an immediate, than for a gradual abolition.

But now, sir, I come to Africa. That is the ground on which I rest, and here it is that I say my right honourable friends do not carry their principles to their full extent. Why ought the slave trade to be abolished? Because it is incurable injustice. How much stronger then is the argument for immediate, than gradual abolition! By allowing it to continue even for one hour, do not my right honourable friends weaken—do not they desert, their own argument of its injustice? If on the ground of injustice it ought to be abolished at last, why ought it not now? Why is injustice to be suffered to remain for a single hour? From what I hear without doors, it is evident that there is a general conviction entertained of its being far from just, and from that very conviction of its injustice, some men have been led, I fear, to the supposition, that the slave trade never could have been

permitted to begin, but from some strong and irresistible necessity; a necessity, however, which if it was fancied to exist at first, I have shown cannot be thought by any man whatever to exist at present. This plea of necessity, thus presumed, and presumed, as I suspect, from the circumstance of injustice itself, has caused a sort of acquiescence in the continuance of this evil. Men have been led to place it in the rank of those necessary evils, which are supposed to be the lot of human creatures, and to be permitted to fall upon some countries or individuals, rather than upon others, by that Being, whose ways are inscrutable to us, and whose dispensations, it is conceived, we ought not to look into. The origin of evil is indeed a subject beyond the reach of human understanding; and the permission of it by the Supreme Being, is a subject into which it belongs not to us to inquire. But where the evil in question is a moral evil which a man can scrutinize, and where that moral evil has its origin with ourselves, let us not imagine that we can clear our consciences by this general, not to say irreligious and impious way of laying aside the question. If we reflect at all on this subject, we must see that every necessary evil supposes that some other and greater evil would be incurred were it removed. I therefore desire to ask, what can be that greater evil, which can be stated to overbalance the one in question?—I know of no evil that ever has existed, nor can imagine any evil to exist, worse than the tearing of EIGHTY THOUSAND PERSONS annually from their native land, by a combination of the most civilized nations, in the most enlightened quarter of the globe; but more especially by that nation, which calls herself the most free and the most happy of them all. Even if these miserable beings were proved guilty of every crime before you take them off, of which however not a single proof is adduced, ought *we* to take upon ourselves the office of executioners? And even if we condescend so far, still can we be justified in taking them, unless we have clear proof that they are criminals?

But if we go much further; if we ourselves tempt them to sell their fellow creatures to us, we may rest assured, that they will take care to provide by every method, by kidnapping, by village-breaking, by unjust wars, by iniquitous condemnations, by rendering Africa a scene of bloodshed and misery, a supply of victims increasing in proportion to our demand.—Can we then hesitate in deciding whether the wars in Africa are their wars or ours? It was our arms in the river Cameroon put into the hands of the trader, that furnished him with the means of pushing his trade; and I have no more doubt that they are British arms, put into the hands of Africans, which promote universal war and desolation, than I can doubt their having done so in that individual instance.

I have shown how great is the enormity of this evil, even on the supposition that we take only convicts and prisoners of war. But take the subject in the other way; take it on the grounds stated by the right honourable gentleman over the way; and how does it stand? Think of EIGHTY THOUSAND persons carried away out of their country, by *we know not what means;* For crimes imputed; For light or inconsiderable faults; For debt perhaps; For the crime of witchcraft; Or a thousand other weak and scandalous pretexts! Besides all the fraud and kidnapping, the villanies and perfidy, by which the slave trade is supplied. Reflect on these eighty thousand persons thus annually taken off! There is something in the horrour of it, that surpasses all the bounds of imagination. Admitting that there exists in Africa something like to courts of justice; yet what an office of humiliation and meanness is it in us, to take upon ourselves to carry into execution the partial, the cruel, iniquitous sentences of such courts, as if we also were strangers to all religion, and to the first principles of justice. But that country, it is said, has been in some degree civilized, and civilized by us. It is said they have gained some knowledge of the principles of justice. What, sir, have they gained principles of justice from *us?* Is their civilization

brought about by us!—Yes, we give them enough of our intercourse to convey to them the means, and to initiate them in the study of mutual destruction. We give them just enough of the forms of justice to enable them to add the pretext of legal trials to their other modes of perpetrating the most atrocious iniquity. We give them just enough of European improvements, to enable them the more effectually to turn Africa into a ravaged wilderness. Some evidences say that the Africans are addicted to the practice of gambling; that they even sell their wives and children, and ultimately themselves. Are these then the legitimate sources of slavery? Shall we pretend that we can thus acquire an honest right to exact the labour of these people? Can we pretend that we have a right to carry away to distant regions, men of whom we know nothing by authentick inquiry, and of whom there is every reasonable presumption to think, that those who sell them to us have no right to do so. But the evil does not stop here. I feel that there is not time for me to make all the remarks which the subject deserves, and I refrain from attempting to enumerate half the dreadful consequences of this system. Do you think nothing of the ruin and the miseries in which so many other individuals, still remaining in Africa, are involved in consequence of carrying off so many myriads of people? Do you think nothing of their families which are left behind; of the connexions which are broken; of the friendships, attachments, and relationships that are burst asunder? Do you think nothing of the miseries in consequence, that are felt from generation to generation; of the privation of that happiness which might be communicated to them by the introduction of civilisation, and of mental and moral improvement? A happiness which you withhold from them so long as you permit the slave trade to continue. What do you yet know of the internal state of Africa? You have carried on a trade to that quarter of the globe from this civilized and enlightened country; but such a trade,

that instead of diffusing either knowledge or wealth, it has been the check to every laudable pursuit. Instead of any fair interchange of commodities; instead of conveying to them, from this highly favoured land, any means of improvement, you carry with you that noxious plant by which every thing is withered and blasted; under whose shade nothing that is useful or profitable to Africa will ever flourish or take root. Long as that continent has been known to navigators, the extreme line and boundaries of its coasts is all with which Europe is yet become acquainted; while other countries in the same parallel of latitude, through a happier system of intercourse, have reaped the blessings of a mutually beneficial commerce. But as to the whole interiour of that continent you are, by your own principles of commerce, as yet entirely shut out. Africa is known to to you only in its skirts. Yet even there you are able to infuse a poison that spreads its contagious effects from one end of it to the other; which penetrates to its very centre, corrupting every part to which it reaches. You there subvert the whole order of nature; you aggravate every natural barbarity and furnish to every man living on that continent, motives for committing, under the name and pretext of commerce, acts of perpetual violence and perfidy against his neighbour.

Thus, sir, has the perversion of British commerce carried misery instead of happiness to one whole quarter of the globe. False to the very principles of trade, misguided in our policy, and unmindful of our duty, what astonishing—I had almost said, what *irreparable* mischief, have we brought upon that continent!—How shall we ever repair this mischief? How shall we hope to obtain, if it be possible, forgiveness from Heaven for those enormous evils we have committed, if we refuse to make use of those means which the mercy of Providence hath still reserved to us for wiping away the guilt and shame with which we are now covered. If we refuse even this degree of compensation, if knowing the miseries we

have caused, we refuse even now to put a stop to them, how greatly aggravated will be the guilt of Great Britain! and what a blot will these transactions for ever be in the history of this country! Shall we then delay to repair these injuries, and to begin rendering this justice to Africa? Shall we not count the days and hours that are suffered to intervene and to delay the accomplishment of such a work? Reflect what an immense object is before you; what an object for a nation to have in view, and to have a prospect, under the favour of Providence, of being now permitted to attain! I think the house will agree with me in cherishing the ardent wish to enter without delay, upon the measures necessary for these great ends; and I am sure that the immediate abolition of the slave trade is the first, the principal, the most indispensable act of policy, of duty, and of justice, that the legislature of this country has to take, if it is indeed their wish to secure those important objects to which I have alluded, and which we are bound to pursue by the most solemn obligations.

There is, however, one argument set up as a universal answer to every thing that can be urged on our side; whether we address ourselves to the understandings of our opponents, or to their hearts and consciences. It is necessary I should remove this formidable objection. For though not often stated in distinct terms, I fear it is one which has a very wide influence. The slave trade system, it is supposed, has taken so deep root in Africa, that it is absurd to think of its being eradicated; and the abolition of that share of trade carried on by Great Britain, and especially if her example is not followed by other powers, is likely to be of very little service. Give me leave to say in reply to so dangerous an argument, that we ought to be extremely sure indeed of the assumption on which it rests, before we venture to rely on its validity; before we decide that an evil which we ourselves contribute to inflict is incurable, and on that very plea, refuse to desist from bear-

ing our part in the system which produces it. You are not sure, it is said, that other nations will give up the trade, if you should renounce it. I answer, if this trade is as criminal as it is asserted to be, or if it has in it a thousandth part of the criminality, which I, and others, after thorough investigation of the subject, charge upon it, God forbid that we should hesitate in determining to relinquish so iniquitous a traffick; even though it should be retained by other countries. God forbid, however, that we should fail to do our utmost towards inducing other countries to abandon a bloody commerce which they have probably been in good measure led by our example to pursue. God forbid that we should be capable of wishing to arrogate to ourselves the glory of being singular in renouncing it!

I tremble at the thought of gentlemen's indulging themselves in this argument; an argument as pernicious as it is futile. "We are friends" say they, "to humanity. We are second to none of you in our zeal for the good of Africa,—but the French will not abolish,—the Dutch will not abolish. We wait therefore on prudential principles till they join us, or set us an example."

How, sir, is this enormous evil ever to be eradicated, if every nation is thus prudentially to wait till the concurrence of all the world shall have been obtained?—Let me remark too, that there is no nation in Europe that has, on the one hand, plunged so deeply into this guilt as Britain; or that is so likely, on the other, to be looked up to as an example, if she should have the manliness to be the first in decidedly renouncing it. But, sir, does not this argument apply a thousand times more strongly in a contrary way? How much more justly may other nations point to us, and say: "Why should we abolish the slave trade, when Great Britain has not abolished? Britain, free as she is, just and honourable as she is, and deeply also involved as she is in this commerce above all nations, not only has not abolished, but has refused to abolish.—She has investigated it well; she has

gained the completest insight into its nature and effects; she has collected volumes of evidence on every branch of the subject. Her senate has deliberated—has deliberated again and again—and what is the result? She has gravely and solemnly determined to sanction the slave trade. She sanctions it at least for awhile—her legislature therefore, it is plain, sees no guilt in it, and has thus furnished us with the strongest evidence that she can furnish—of the justice unquestionably—and of the policy also, in a certain measure and in certain cases at least, of permitting this traffick to continue."

This, sir, is the argument with which we furnish the other nations of Europe, if we again refuse to put an end to the slave trade. Instead therefore of imagining, that by choosing to presume on their continuing it, we shall have exempted ourselves from guilt, and have transferred the whole criminality to them; let us rather reflect that on the very principle urged against us, we shall henceforth have to answer for their crimes, as well as our own. We have strong reasons to believe that it depends upon us, whether other countries will persist in this bloody trade or not. Already we have suffered one year to pass away, and now that the question is renewed, a proposition is made for gradual, with the view of preventing immediate abolition. I know the difficulty that exists in attempting to reform long established abuses; and I know the danger arising from the argument in favour of delay, in the case of evils which nevertheless are thought too enormous to be born, when considered as perpetual. But by proposing some other period than the present, by prescribing some condition, by waiting for some contingency, or by refusing to proceed till a thousand favourable circumstances unite together; perhaps until we obtain the general concurrence of Europe (a concurrence which I believe never yet took place at the commencement of any one improvement in policy or in morals) year after year escapes, and the most enormous evils go unredressed. We see this abundantly exemplified, not only in pub-

lick, but in private life. Similar observations have been often applied to the case of personal reformation. If you go into the street it is a chance but the first person who crosses you is one, "Vivendi recte qui prorogat horam." We may wait; we may delay to cross the stream before us, till it has run down; but we shall wait for ever, for the river will still flow on, without being exhausted. We shall be no nearer the object which we profess to have in view, so long as the step, which alone can bring us to it, is not taken. Until the actual, the only remedy is applied, we ought neither to flatter ourselves that we have as yet thoroughly laid to heart the evil we affect to deplore; nor that there is as yet any reasonable assurance of its being brought to an actual termination.

It has also been occasionally urged, that there is something in the disposition and nature of the Africans themselves, which renders all prospect of civilization on that continent extremely unpromising. "It has been known," says Mr. Frazer, in his evidence, "that a boy has been put to death, who was refused to be purchased as a slave." This single story was deemed by that gentleman a sufficient proof of the barbarity of the Africans, and of the inutility of abolishing the slave trade. My honourable friend, however, has told you, that this boy had previously run away from his master three several times; that the master had to pay his value according to the custom of his country, every time he was brought back; and that partly from anger at the boy for running away so frequently, and partly to prevent a still further repetition of the same expense, he determined to put him to death. Such was the explanation of the story given in the cross examination. This, sir, is the signal instance that has been dwelt upon of African barbarity.—This African, we admit, was unenlightened, and altogether barbarous: but let us now ask, what would a *civilized* and *enlightened West Indian*, or a body of West Indians, have done in any case of a parallel nature? I will quote you, sir, a law, passed in the West Indies, in the year 1722, which, in turning

over the book I happened just now to cast my eye upon; by which law, this very same crime of running away, is, by the legislature of the island, by the grave and deliberate sentence of that enlightened legislature, *punished with death:* and this, not in the case only, of the *third* offence, but even in the very *first* instance. It is enacted "that if any negro, or other slave, shall withdraw himself from his master, for the term of six months; or any slave that was absent, shall not return within that time, it shall be adjudged felony, and every such person shall suffer death." There is also another West Indian law, by which every negro's hand is armed against his fellow negroes, by his being authorized to kill a runaway slave, and even having a reward held out to him for doing so. Let the house now contrast the two cases. Let them ask themselves which of the two exhibits the greater barbarity? Let them reflect, with a little candour and liberality, whether on the ground of any of those facts, and loose insinuations as to the sacrifices to be met with in the evidence, they can possibly reconcile to themselves the excluding of Africa from all means of civilisation: Whether they can possibly vote for the continuance of the slave trade upon the principle, that the Africans have shown themselves to be a race of *incorrigible barbarians.*

I hope, therefore, we shall hear no more of the moral impossibility of civilizing the Africans, nor have our understandings and consciences again insulted, by being called upon to sanction the slave trade, until other nations shall have set the example of abolishing it. While we have been deliberating upon the subject, one nation, not ordinarily taking the lead in politicks, nor by any means remarkable for the boldness of its councils, has determined on a gradual abolition; a determination, indeed, which, since it permits for a time the existence of the slave trade, would be an unfortunate pattern for our imitation. France, it is said, will take up the trade if we relinquish it. What? Is it supposed that in the present situation of St. Domingo, of an island which

used to take three-fourths of all the slaves required by the colonies of France, she, of all countries, will think of taking it up? What countries remain? The Portuguese, the Dutch, and the Spaniards. Of those countries let me delare it is my opinion, that if they see us renounce the trade, after full deliberation, they will not be disposed, even on principles of policy, to rush further into it. But I say more. How are they to furnish the capital necessary for carrying it on? If there is any aggravation of our guilt, in this wretched business, greater than another, it is that we have stooped to be the carriers of these miserable beings from Africa to the West Indies for all the other powers of Europe. And now, sir, if we retire from the trade altogether, I ask, where is that fund which is to be raised at once by other nations, equal to the purchase of 30 or 40,000 slaves? A fund, which if we rate them at 40l. or 50l. each, cannot make a capital of less than a million and a half, or two millions of money. From what branch of their commerce is it that these European nations will draw together a fund to feed this monster? to keep alive this detestable commerce? And even if they should make the attempt, will not that immense chasm, which must instantly be created in the other parts of their trade, from which this vast capital must be withdrawn in order to supply the slave trade, be filled up by yourselves? Will not these branches of commerce which they must leave, and from which they must withdraw their industry and their capitals, in order to apply them to the slave trade, be then taken up by British merchants? Will you not even in this case, find your capital flow into these deserted channels? Will not your capital be turned from the slave trade to that natural and innocent commerce from which they must withdraw their capitals in proportion as they take up the traffick in the flesh and blood of their fellow creatures?

The committe sees, I trust, how little ground of objection to our proposition there is in this part of our adversaries' argument.

be most material; and if the house duly consider them, I cannot conceive that any member can go out of it, and say, "I have done my duty; I have discharged my trust faithfully and conscientiously to my constituents and my country," and at the same time reject an inquiry into the present state of the nation. The state of the nation, as I have just said, is most undoubtedly to be considered in various lights. First of all, as to our own resources with respect to men; with respect to money; and with respect to the using of those men and that money for the purposes of the war in which we are now engaged. But these resources of men and money, and the manner in which they are to be used, are not only to be considered by themselves, but we are likewise to consider whence these resources flow—the state of population, manufactures and commerce, and general prosperity of the country. When we have done this, we must go next into a consideration of our connexions abroad. We must take a survey of our allies, the dependance that may be placed on them; the situation of those allies, and the probability both in respect to their will and their power to act, and to serve the common cause.

Sir, in my opinion, even when these points are considered, there are others of equal importance which remain to be discussed: I mean with respect to the principles on which we have hitherto carried on this war, and on which we are likely to continue to carry it on. It is material, when we are engaged in a war, particularly of this kind, which has been qualified by so many different epithets, and on which the eyes of mankind are so peculiarly fixed; it is material, I repeat that in such a war we should invariably maintain the character of moderation, humanity, and justice, without which it is impossible that we should also support the reputation of vigour and exertion, of wisdom and prudence. These are part, and not the least important, of the resources of a country. They are important in another view, because it is essential to consider whether we have carried on the war with

justice and vigour, with wisdom and prudence; and though I hope and believe the contrary will turn out to be the case; yet if it appear that the war was not only just in its origin (which for the sake of argument I shall suppose for a moment) but that we have acted in the prosecution of it vigorously and wisely, then I am afraid the result will be complete despair. If our conduct in the management of the present war has been marked with vigour and wisdom, and we have been more than two years exhausting our resources ineffectually, I wish to know, if neither from a change of measures nor a change of councils I have any reason to look for better success in the future operations of this war (which I hope and trust will not turn out to be true) what other inference I can draw but that of absolute and irremediable despair? If that be the case, the result of an inquiry into the state of the nation will be, that confidence ought to be given to the king's ministers. For however calamitous the present state of the country may be, if it was brought about without any fault of theirs, undoubtedly confidence ought not to be withdrawn from them: but even in this case an inquiry will be material, because it will lead to a discovery of the true causes of our failures, and of the present distresses of the country, and prove the necessity of abandoning the pursuit of an object which, experience has taught us, cannot be obtained. The inquiry will be even advantageous to ministers, by showing that they have acted with justice, wisdom, and vigour, in the steps which they have taken, though they have been unfortunate in the result. But if it turns out, as I suspect it will, that ministers have not acted according to any of the principles I have now stated; if they have neither acted with justice and humanity, nor with wisdom and vigour, then it is possible that the object may still be obtained, though the means must be varied. But, as I have already said, if ministers have acted with justice and vigour, then the result must be perfect despair; and it belongs to this house to force ministers, if they are unwilling, to abandon for ever an ob-

Having now detained the house so long, all that I will further add, shall be on that important subject, the civilisation of Africa, which I have already shown that I consider as the leading feature in this question. Grieved am I to think that there should be a single person in this country, much more that there should be a single member in the British parliament, who can look on the present dark, uncultivated, and uncivilized state of that continent, as a ground for continuing the slave trade; as a ground not only for refusing to attempt the improvement of Africa, but even for hindering and intercepting every ray of light which might otherwise break in upon her, as a ground for refusing to her the common chance and the common means with which other nations have been blessed, of emerging from their native barbarism.

Here, as in every other branch of this extensive question, the argument of our adversaries pleads against them. For, surely, sir, the present deplorable state of Africa, especially when we reflect that her chief calamities are to be ascribed to us, calls for our generous aid, rather than justifies any despair on our part of her recovery, and still less any further repetition of our injuries.

I will not much longer fatigue the attention of the house; but this point has impressed itself so deeply on my mind, that I must trouble the committee with a few additional observations. Are we justified, I ask, on any theory, or by any one insance to be found in the history of the world, from its very beginning to this day, in forming the supposition which I am now combating? Are we justified in supposing that the particular practice which we encourage in Africa, of men's selling each other for slaves, is any symptom of a barbarism that is incurable? Are we justified in supposing that even the practice of offering up human sacrifices proves a total incapacity for civilisation? I believe it will be found, and perhaps much more generally than is supposed, that both the trade in slaves, and the still more savage custom of offering human sacrifices, obtained in former periods, throughout

many of those nations which now, by the blessings of Providence, and by a long progression of improvements, are advanced the furthest in civilisation. I believe, sir, that, if we will reflect an instant, we shall find that this observation comes directly home to our own selves; and that, on the same ground on which we now are disposed to proscribe Africa for ever, from all possibility of improvement, we ourselves might, in like manner, have been proscribed, and for ever shut out from all the blessings which we now enjoy.

There was a time, sir, which it may be fit sometimes to revive in the remembrance of our countrymen, when even human sacrifices are said to have been offered in this island. But I would peculiarly observe on this day, for it is a case precisely in point, that the very practice of the slave trade once prevailed among us. Slaves, as we may read in Henry's History of Great Britain, were formerly an established article of our exports. "Great numbers," he says, "were exported like cattle, from the British coast, and were to be seen exposed for sale in the Roman market." It does not distinctly appear, by what means they were procured; but there was unquestionably no small resemblance, in this particular point, between the case of our ancestors and that of the present wretched natives of Africa: for the historian tells you that 'adultery, witchcraft and debt were probably some of the chief sources of supplying the Roman' marke with British slaves; that prisoners taken in war were added to the number; and that there might be among them some unfortunate gamesters who, after having lost all their goods, at length staked themselves, their wives, and their children." Every one of these sources of slavery has been stated, and almost precisely in the same terms, to be at this hour a source of slavery in Africa. And these circumstances, sir, with a solitary instance or two of human sacrifices, furnish the alleged proofs, that Africa labours under a natural incapacity for civilisation; that it is enthusiasm and fanaticism to think that she can ever enjoy the knowledge and the morals

of Europe ; that Providence never intended her to rise above a state of barbarism ; that Providence has irrevocably doomed her to be only a nursery for slaves for us free and civilized Europeans. Allow of this principle, as applied to Africa, and I should be glad to know why it might not also have been applied to ancient and uncivilized Britain. Why might not some Roman Senator, reasoning on the principles of some honourable gentlemen, and pointing to British barbarians, have predicted with equal boldness, "there is a people that will never rise to civilisation—there is a people destined never to be free—a people without the understanding necessary for the attainment of useful arts ; depressed by the hand of nature below the level of the human species; and created to form a supply of slaves for the rest of the world." Might not this have been said, according to the principles, which we now hear stated in all respects as fairly and as truly of Britain herself, at that period of her history, as it can now be said by us of the inhabitants of Africa ?

We, sir, have long since emerged from barbarism. We have almost forgotten that we were once barbarians. We are now raised to a situation which exhibits a striking contrast to every circumstance by which a Roman might have characterized us, and by which we now characterize Africa. There is indeed one thing wanting to complete the contrast, and to clear us altogether from the imputation of acting even to this hour as barbarians : for we continue to this hour a barbarous traffick in slaves ; we continue it even yet in spite of all our great and undeniable pretensions to civilisation. We were once as obscure among the nations of the earth, as savage in our manners, as debased in our morals, as degraded in our understandings, as these unhappy Africans are at present. But in the lapse of a long series of years, by a progression slow, and for a time, almost imperceptible, we have become rich in a variety of acquirements, favoured above measure in the gifts of Providence, unrivalled in commerce, preeminent in arts, fore-

most in the pursuits of philosophy and science, and established in all the blessings of civil society. We are in the possession of peace, of happiness, and of liberty. We are under the guidance of a mild and beneficent religion; and we are protected by impartial laws, and the purest administration of justice. We are living under a system of government, which our own happy experience leads us to pronounce the best and wisest which has ever yet been framed; a system which has become the admiration of the world. From all these blessings, we must for ever have been shut out, had there been any truth in those principles which some gentlemen have not hesitated to lay down as applicable to the case of Africa. Had those principles been true, we ourselves had languished to this hour in that miserable state of ignorance, brutality, and degradation, in which history proves our ancestors to have been immersed. Had other nations adopted these principles in their conduct towards us; had other nations applied to Great Britain the reasoning which some of the senators of this very island now apply to Africa; ages might have passed without our emerging from barbarism; and we who are enjoying the blessings of British civilisation, of British laws, and British liberty, might, at this hour, have been little superiour, either in morals, in knowledge, or refinement, to the rude inhabitants of the coast of Guinea.

If then we feel that this perpetual confinement in the fetters of brutal ignorance, would have been the greatest calamity which could have befallen us; if we view with gratitude and exultation the contrast between the peculiar blessings we enjoy, and the wretchedness of the ancient inhabitants of Britain; if we shudder to think of the misery which would still have overwhelmed us, had Great Britain continued to the present times to be the mart for slaves to the more civilized nations of the world, through some cruel policy of theirs, GOD forbid that *we* should any longer subject Africa to the same dreadful scourge, and preclude the light of

knowledge which has reached every other quarter of the globe, from having access to her coasts.

I trust we shall no longer continue this commerce, to the destruction of every improvement on that wide continent; and shall not consider ourselves as conferring too great a boon, in restoring its inhabitants to the rank of human beings. I trust, we shall not think ourselves too liberal, if, by abolishing the slave trade, we give them the same common chance of civilisation with other parts of the world, and that we shall now allow to Africa the opportunity, the hope, the prospect of attaining to the same blessings which we ourselves, through the favourable dispensations of Divine Providence, have been permitted, at a much more early period, to enjoy. If we listen to the voice of reason and duty, and pursue this night the line of conduct which they prescribe, some of us may live to see a reverse of that picture, from which we now turn our eyes with shame and regret. We may live to behold the natives of Africa, engaged in the calm occupations of industry, in the pursuits of a just and legitimate commerce. We may behold the beams of science and philosophy breaking in upon their land, which at some happy period in still later times, may blaze with full lustre; and joining their influence to that of pure religion, may illuminate and invigorate the most distant extremities of that immense continent. Then may we hope that even Africa, though last of all the quarters of the globe, shall enjoy at length in the evening of her days, those blessings which have descended so plentifully upon us in a much earlier period of the world. Then also will Europe, participating in her improvement and prosperity, receive an ample recompense for the tardy kindness, if kindness it can be called, of no longer hindering that continent from extricating herself out of the darkness which, in other more fortunate regions, has been so much more speedily dispelled.

——*Nos primus equis oriens afflavit anhelis;*
Illic sera rubens accendit lumina vesper.

Then, sir, may be applied to Africa, those words originally used indeed with a different view:

His demum exactis———————
Devenere locos lætos, et amœna vireta
Fortunatorum nemorum, sedesque beatas;
Largior hic campos Æther et lumine vestit
Purpuero:

It is in this view, sir,—it is an atonement for our long and cruel injustice towards Africa, that the measure proposed by my honourable friend most forcibly recomends itself to my mind. The great and happy change to be expected in the state of her inhabitants, is of all the various and important benefits of the abolition, in my estimation, incomparably the most extensive and important.

I shall vote, sir, against the adjournment; and I shall also oppose to the utmost every proposition, which in any way may tend either to prevent, or even to postpone for an hour, the total abolition of the slave trade: a measure which, on all the various grounds which I have stated, we are bound, by the most pressing and indispensable duty, to adopt.

MR. FOX'S SPEECH,

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON A MOTION FOR AN INQUIRY INTO THE STATE OF THE NATION, MARCH THE 24TH, 1795.

INQUIRIES into the state of the nation by specifick motions, are, we believe, peculiar to the British senate. The practice, however, is perfectly congenial with the spirit of popular government; and if not employed as an instrument of faction, may sometimes be resorted to with decisive utility. By it, perhaps, more than any other mode of parliamentary proceeding, the real condition of a country is exposed to publick view, and that sort of information elicited which conduces to a just appreciation of the measures of a ministry. While in opposition, Mr. Fox delighted to indulge in these discussions. From the number and variety of topicks necessarily embraced by so extensive a range, they were well adapted to display the copiousness of his political intelligence, and supplied him with the best possible occasion of venting the fulness of his invective.

The motion of inquiry, which gave rise to the following speech, was made at a period singularly auspicious for an attack on the administration. In consequence of the recent disasters of the Allies on the Continent, and the utter disappointment of the sanguine expectations of success previously encouraged, the nation were sunk into the gloom of despondency, and the sourness of disgust. But, though supported by these intrinsick advantages, and by all the energy

of Mr. Fox's eloquence, the motion was suppressed by a considerable majority, which clung to the minister with unabated confidence.

This speech is a very superiour production. We have seen specimens of eloquence more carefully polished, more embellished by the ornaments of taste, and more resplendent with gorgeousness of imagery, but rarely one that claimed more fervor of declamation, more dexterity of argument, more amplification of knowledge, or a more striking exhibition of intellectual capacity.

SPEECH, &c.

MR. SPEAKER,

IN pursuance of the notice I gave on a former day, I now rise to make a motion, that this house do resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to consider of the state of the nation. Such a motion has been often made in this house, and, I believe, it has been seldom unsuccessful. I admit some grounds ought always on such an occasion to be laid before the house; and unless some matter is brought forward to induce you to take such a step, unless the state and circumstances of the country call on you to enter on this inquiry, I do not expect they will agree to my motion.

If, in the course of what I shall have to state there may be many things in which I shall not have the good fortune to have the concurrence of the whole house, I am confident I shall be able to state one thing, on which there will not be one dissentient voice. In whatever light men may consider the present state of Europe, however much they may differ about the mode of conducting the present war, in whatever way they may view the situation of the publick mind in every part of the civilized world; whatever may be their sentiments on these different topicks, they will all agree in one conclusion with respect to this country, namely, that this is a time of all others,

in which it is most material and most important, what indeed is always material and important, that this house should stand high in the opinion of its constituents, and that it should be entitled to their confidence and respect, by showing that it is really concerned for their dearest and most valuable interests. If I had nothing else to state on this business, I should think all those who are impressed with that opinion, and, who seriously observing the critical situation of mankind, are convinced that the practical importance of this house depends on its being respected by its constituents abroad, would, without any additional argument, be disposed to admit, that in order to entitle us to that respect, which we all wish to possess, which it is our duty to maintain, but which we cannot hope to enjoy unless we deserve it, it is incumbent on this house to enter into a detailed and serious examination of the state of the nation. No man will deny, that the dangers that surround the country in the present crisis are many and alarming; and therefore it must follow, that the house of commons cannot be said to do its duty, to do it faithfully and conscientiously, if, in a time of the greatest and most imminent danger, it gives blind and implicit confidence to any executive government, without grounding that confidence on a thorough, serious, complete, and detailed investigation of the past.

I stated that this motion has been made at different times, in the history of this country, to which it is necessary to advert. I myself had the honour of making a similar motion in this house, in the year 1777, a time most undoubtedly of great peril and danger. But whoever looks back to the events of that period, and takes into the account even the most unfortunate of them, the surrender of an army at Saratoga, calamitous as they were, there is no man who looks back to that period and compares it with this, who will not see that the dangers which then threatened this nation were trifling and insignificant, that the losses then sustained were of no consequence when compared to those we have suffered at this

moment; and the contrast will be still greater when we compare the consequences of the dangers and disasters of that period, with the effects of those recent misfortunes which now affect every part of the British empire. In the year 1777, however, I thought it necessary to state the grounds which then occurred to me for going into a consideration of the state of the nation. And although the majority of the house, with whom I had not the good fortune to concur, ultimately negatived the different questions which were brought forward, they thought the crisis to be such, that it was not becoming the dignity or consistent with the character of the house of commons, at such an awful and momentous period, to decline the proposed inquiry into the state of the nation. For momentous and awful it undoubtedly was, and must always be so considered in itself, though it wears an aspect totally different when compared with the moment at which I am now speaking.

Sir, there are many in this house who think that disaffection to the constitution of the country has spread much wider among his majesty's subjects than I believe it has. Many have been more afraid of the progress of new and French principles than I have been, because they have thought them much more considerable in their influence than I have been able to persuade myself they really are. At the same time I will not deceive the house nor myself so far as not to admit, that, if there has been any danger from the progress of French principles and French opinions, the late events have not a little tended to heighten and increase that danger. And not merely all the events abroad but all the measures which have been adopted at home have more particularly contributed to render the prospect imminent and alarming.

I am one of those who think, not only that a majority of the people (for that would ill express my opinion) but that the great and almost unanimous body of the nation, are full of loyalty to his majesty, and of affection to the constitution of the country. I am, however, also of opinion, that there are some

now, as there have been at all times, who are actuated by different sentiments and different views. I am very much afraid such men have been encouraged to a certain degree by the progress of the French arms on the continent, though in a much higher degree by the conduct of ministers at home. The consequence has certainly been, that these principles and opinions have rather gained than lost credit, in this country; and this danger, which is daily and hourly increasing, has arisen not from plots and conspiracies, the existence of which I have never thought well proved, but from a general opinion that the house of commons are not the representatives of the people of England; by which I do not mean that they are not returned by the people, but that they are not even virtually their representatives; that they do not sincerely feel for the calamities of the people of England; and that they do not take that lively concern in their comfort and happiness which their situation calls on them to participate. If such an opinion has gone forth, and if there is too much reason to suspect that it has made a considerable impression on the publick mind, what argument can be so strong in support of such an opinion as to afford those who have adopted it an opportunity to say, can you believe that the constitution of Great Britain is what you have been taught to esteem, and that the house of commons is what you boast it to be, when at a time of the most critical importance, of the most alarming danger, and when the conduct of the executive government, whether culpable or laudable, has been attended with the greatest calamities, the house of commons can sit still without inquiry, without even knowing the state of the country, and without calling to an account (I do not mean for punishment) the executive government, for the most marked failure of measures that ever happened to any executive goverment at any period of our history? I say, this argument is of great weight. If it should appear, at a moment when the opinion of the country seems to be materially changed; if at a period when many are for negotia-

tion, when many who were formerly convinced of the justice and necessity of the war, though still adhering to their original sentiments, yet have so far altered their views as to think there ought to be an immediate attempt at negotiation, and are willing at present to consider as no obstacles of treaty, many of those circumstances which they formerly thought incompatible with the security, the dignity, and the honour of Great Britain; if at such a period as this, we should find that the house of commons still continue the same blind and implicit confidence, and do not appear to be actuated in any degree by the common opinion of the publick, but persevere in laying burthens on their constituents, and taking measures which will render indispensably necessary still heavier burthens; if the house do all this, without even inquiring how far the money they have hitherto voted away has been spent for the advantage, the honour, and security of Great Britain; without regarding how many oceans of blood have been made to flow, and how many millions of money have been expended; if all this is so, I wish to know what I am to answer to the enemies of the British constitution. I wish the king's ministers to furnish me with arguments to combat in favour of such a conduct. I wish them to tell me, how I am to contend that the British constitution is the most perfect of all constitutions, and the British house of commons the best security for the rights and liberties of the subject. The obvious argument in the mouth of the enemies of our constitution is this, how can that be good which produces effects so bad? And how can that government and that constitution be good, which can suffer such failures in its administration, to pass without punishment, and not only without punishment, but without inquiry? When this house can sit as indifferent and unconcerned spectators in the midst of a situation admitted on all hands to be the most important and most critical that ever existed in the annals of the country, I ask what I am to say to this house, and to my constituents in vindication of this house, if they continue to testify the same supineness which they hitherto

have done? If I have nothing to say, I have no answer to make, how can we resist the conclusion, that that system cannot be good which in practice is bad, and where the failures are even greater than in those governments that are more arbitrary? The defence of the British constitution which I have always used, has been a practical defence; that the British constitution, though not tallying with the theories of this man, or the notions of that man, has produced substantial happiness to the people. Such I consider to be the true defence of the British constitution. Take away that, and I am at a loss on what ground to stand, and how I am to answer those who desire me to look at the practice of the present moment. An executive government, I question not now whether good or bad, an executive government above two years has proceeded on a plan, whether originally just or not, I am not now deciding, has incurred an expense beyond the example of all former times, has occasioned an effusion of human blood beyond all former periods, has recommended a system to be adopted for the attainment of certain objects, that system has been pursued, confidence has been placed in them, and now, at the end of more than two years, we are confessedly further from every object that was held out to us, than when we first engaged in this war. Every plan has failed, and has turned against us; and this is the system I am to defend on the ground of the practical good it has produced. I ask, what would be the case of a constitution practically bad? Would it not be precisely and exactly the same? Is it not one of the most powerful arguments against the government of any country, that, provided the prince is satisfied, no failures will be called in question, and the administration may with impunity be conducted upon principles the most hostile to the interests of the people? If that be one of the charges brought against arbitrary governments, which perhaps is not universally true, for the most despotick princes have sometimes been obliged to dismiss their ministers when, in consequence of their gross misconduct,

they have roused the indignation of the publick; if such a charge be applied to Great Britain, and if it is possible for an administration, whether from misconduct or otherwise, to produce such a series of disgraces, disasters, and calamities as we have experienced since the commencement of the present war; if we are to have persons at the head of affairs under whose management calamity follows calamity; if such an administration can be suffered to exist in this country, except after a solemn and diligent inquiry, which may prove their case to be an exception to the common rule, then one of the most serious accusations against arbitrary governments is applicable to that constitution under which we live; I mean so far as regards the present administration, and not the personal liberty of the subject, which is not now under consideration.

I should think, therefore, if I did nothing but state to the house, what it is not necessary that the house should hear from me, namely, that we have been upwards of two years engaged in war, that all our plans have failed, that all hope is lost, and that, in point of fact, the enemy against whom we thought we were acting conjointly with all Europe, are stronger in credit and reputation than they were at the beginning of the war, and have at this moment gained more than the wildest imaginations of those who drove us into it ever ascribed either to their ambition or to their principles; more then ever entered even into the minds of the most ambitious of the French monarchs in former days to attempt; I should think this quite ground enough to induce the house to enter into a consideration of the state of the nation. But I will not confine myself to this general argument. The state of the nation divides itself undoubtedly into many different branches; and I am perfectly sure, if I were to tire your patience and exhaust my own strength, as far as it is possible for me to do, I should still be compelled to omit many circumstances which are closely connected with this subject. I shall endeavour therefore to state some few which I deem to

ject, which a period of upwards of two years has proved to be unattainable. For that object, which experience has shown cannot be accomplished by ordinary means, must be bad, and ought to be no longer pursued.

Now, sir, with respect to the first branch, I have premised, that it is impossible for me to state with accuracy to the house the loss of men in this contest; and if the house goes into a committee, I should certainly wish to have laid before it a complete and accurate return of the loss of men since the commencement of the present war.

First, with respect to the loss of the British, as the most important part of the subject, we have had a paper laid before us this session, which, from what appears on the face of it, cannot possibly be correct. I have compared it with other accounts, on which I admit I have not the highest reliance, those detailed in the London Gazette; and I find a considerable difference between the account of the loss of men as stated in the Gazette, and that in the paper which now lies on your table. The paper upon your table, by giving a return of the privates only, and by omitting to give any return of the officers, serjeants, drummers, &c. diminishes our loss in appearance, at least one tenth. There are also losses mentioned, although perhaps not specified, in the Gazette, of which no return is to be found in this paper. There is one general item to which I wish to advert; an account of a considerable loss about the 9th of May, and of which no notice whatever is taken in the paper upon your table. I have heard there was some loss of British at Nieuport: British standards were taken at Valenciennes and Conde; and of course there must have been loss of British troops also in that quarter. The loss at Bergem-op-Zoom is not enumerated in this account. I mention these circumstances to show, that if any gentlemen wish to console themselves with the idea, that there was no loss of men during the last campaign, except what appears from the paper on the table, they deceive themselves most grossly; and

there is but too much reason to suppose, ministers have concerted among themselves to make the loss of British appear less considerable than it really is. I have seen returns, which I believe to be authentick, which make the number of British in the month of September last 26,000 men. Now are there any hopes, when that army shall come home, and the sooner it comes home the better, that the loss out of that number will not be much greater than we have been taught to believe? Are there any hopes that half of that number will return? A list of the wounded, killed and missing will not be sufficient, because undoubtedly in every army there is much mortality not included under what is generally called the loss of men; therefore, instead of calculating the loss from the number of killed, wounded and missing, we must examine the general state of the army. We must compare its numbers at different periods, and include mortality of every kind. We must not only look to the army in Flanders, but we must look to our army wherever it is stationed, whether in Flanders, in the East or West Indies, or on the Continent. We must also attend to the number of recruits that have been enlisted since the commencement of the present war, and, by comparing the number of these and the general state of the army at different times, judge from a view of the whole circumstances what has been the real loss of men. If you follow this method, which I take to be the only just mode of calculation, then I believe you will find that the loss of men sustained in this war has been such as will make every thinking man, who knows any thing of the population of this country, reflect very seriously whether we can afford to substitute new armies for the old.

But we ought to ascertain not only the loss of men in the British army and navy, but also the loss of all troops in British pay. When that article comes to be stated, I believe you will find the loss to be even greater than that of the British. That loss it is evident must likewise be taken into the account. But that is not all. If you consider that this is a war in which

we cannot act but through the medium of great continental alliances, it becomes a most material part of this consideration to state also the loss of our allies. Is it or is it not true, that in the course of the last campaign only, there surrendered prisoners of war to the French republick more than 60,000 men? If this is true, ought it not to induce a British house of commons to go into this inquiry before we proceed further in a war which has brought so many calamities upon all who have had any share in carrying it on, and which has exhausted so much blood and treasure? Ought we not to go into a committee of inquiry to satisfy ourselves of the real extent of British population, and to ascertain whether the country is able to bear such drains of men for the purposes of war? If we go into this inquiry, I will venture to assert that I speak far below the truth when I say, that, during the last campaign only, more than 60,000 men of all descriptions have surrendered to the republick of France.

We all know that it is supposed, and I hope it is true, that this country has of late years increased very much in population. That increase, however, has not been in proportion to its increase of wealth and prosperity. I beg leave to have recourse to some documents, which have been laid before the house to give us information with respect to the plan lately adopted for manning his majesty's navy. From these documents, upon which I suppose we may rely, we have an account of facts which, to many persons, may appear, as undoubtedly they appear to me, somewhat surprising. From the account contained in these papers, we find that the whole number of houses in Great Britain now paying taxes to government does not materially differ from the number of houses paying taxes to government in 1777, a period of eighteen years during which we are supposed to have advanced so much in point of wealth and splendour. I know that many persons reject this account, and say it cannot be true, because it is contrary to general observation. Now with respect to houses paying

taxes it most certainly is correct; and it may be asked, whether the great increase of houses of late is of such as pay taxes, or of cottages of the lower sort which are exempted. I have another observation to make on this paper. I immediately turned my eye to those places where I conceived that the population had most increased. I looked at Middlesex and Lancaster, and I found, according to this paper, that the increase there has been considerable, and likewise in some other places; but that in other counties of Great Britain this increase seems to be balanced by a general decrease, and therefore the paper on the table, though not wholly to be relied on, is not wholly to be rejected. The increase in the two counties of Middlesex and Lancaster, which I have just mentioned, confirms the accuracy of the statement. The result then seems to be, as I have already said, that the population of Great Britain has not increased in proportion to its apparent wealth and prosperity, and that it cannot afford to repair the loss of blood which it has already suffered by the war.

But it may be said, his majesty has other dominions from which resources of men may be procured—I particularly allude to Ireland, to which, before I sit down, it may be proper for me to advert. There is no one circumstance in which our sister kingdom, from her happy connexion with this country, is of more importance than in the number of men which she furnishes to the army and navy of Great Britain in time of war; and if, by any strange and crooked policy, that country should be alienated in affection from this, and lose that zeal which has commonly marked and distinguished her in the publick cause; I say, if any strange or misguided policy should unfortunately produce such an effect, it is obvious that all the observations I have made on the population of this country, and its inadequacy to support such a ruinous war as that in which we are now engaged, all these arguments will be strengthened to a degree which those who are not well acquainted with this subject can scarcely conceive.

The next article of resource which I mentioned is that of money. We have now in the course of this war funded somewhat above 50,000,000 l. and when we add to that, the increase of unfunded debt, we shall find we have already incurred an expense of between sixty and seventy millions. I trust I shall not be thought to have overstated it, by any man who has paid the least attention to the subject. We have for that purpose raised taxes of a permanent sort of about 3,000,000 l. sterling per annum. I do not affect to speak with perfect accuracy and correctness upon this subject; but the permanent taxes of this country which have been imposed in consequence of the present war, cannot be at this moment much less than three millions sterling. Now it is said, though the permanent taxes of the country have been increased in order to supply the exigencies of the state: yet they are not such taxes as will be felt severely by the poor; they are not such taxes as will be felt by the people in general. How far some of them have been well selected or not, is a question, on which I shall not take up the time of the house. I shall only observe, if they are necessary, they must be born, unless others that are better can be subtituted in their place. But to say that the taxes of last year, and particularly those of the present year will not fall, and fall with terrible weight on the middling ranks of the people of this country, who are the great supporters of the state is to speak without any knowledge of the situation of the country. It is true, as has been said, that it is proper to tax luxuries and vanity in preference to the necessaries of life. It is proper to tax heavily the higher orders of society, because they are well able to bear the burthen. But it has been falsely supposed that in proportion as the rich are taxed the poor are relieved. In the present state of this country, those taxes which ministers call taxes on luxuries fall very heavy indeed on the most numerous class of society, and consequently must fall with peculiar pressure on the poorest class. The idea of imposing taxes which shall fall upon one class only, and shall in no degree

be felt by the others, however plausible and specious it may appear in theory, is in fact an idle dream. We cannot lay a tax on the poor that will not fall on the rich; and, I am sorry to say, it is not possible to impose a tax on the rich which will not be felt by the poor.

We have therefore contracted near seventy millions of new debt in the prosecution of the present war, which has produced near three millions per annum of permanent taxes to be paid by the inhabitants of this country. But let us admit for a moment that these three millions are not a burthen too heavy for the people to bear—if this war is to go on, let me ask the right honourable gentleman opposite to me, whether he has considered of the absolute necessity of imposing burthens for the next campaign to as great an amount, and possibly to a much greater extent than any which this country has yet experienced? For, if the war goes on, our burthens must necessarily increase in proportion to the length of its duration. Let it not be said in answer to this: "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." This is not an answer fit for a statesman to use, and is not the answer which a British house of commons, groaning under an intolerable load of taxes, ought to receive. This house ought to look to the probability of future expenditure. We ought to calculate on the continuation of the war, and to consider what are the resources by which it is to be supported. We ought to consider how far the people of this country are able to bear more taxes, and how far the different branches of our trade and manufactures are capable of supporting additional duties; for that more will be necessary in the course of the next year is what no man will dispute. Do not all these circumstances incontestably prove that it is the bounden duty of this house to go into an investigation of the present state of the country, and to prove to our constituents and the country at large, that, as we have not spared their blood and their treasure, so we shall not spare our own labour or our own responsiblity? It is only by entering into this investigation, and by

comparing the object with the means, that we can determine whether we ought to renounce the object, or change the means by which the object is to be obtained; or whether we are to continue the same hopeless object with the same hopeless means; whether with the same administration, with the same advisers, we are to persevere in a system which has hitherto produced nothing but the greatest degree of misfortune and misery.

It is said, however, that our resources are supported by the trade and manufactures of the kingdom, and that these are in a most flourishing condition. In order to see how far this assertion is well founded, let us a little examine the state of the trade and manufactures of the kingdom; and first of its manufactures. I wish to refer to those counties where the manufactures of Great Britain have been carried to the greatest perfection, and to know of these gentlemen who are infinitely better acquainted with the state of those counties than I can pretend to be, what their opinion is with respect to those manufactures, and what effect the present war has had upon them. I wish to know of those gentlemen, whether the manufactures have not been most materially injured by the war; and whether the circumstance of their appearing to have suffered less last year, than in the year preceding, was not owing to our gaining the possession of the French West India islands. I wish to know whether this was not one of the fortunate circumstances which had the effect to afford a temporary relief, but to the duration of which we cannot look with any reasonable prospect. If we go into a committee, we shall have laid before us of course, accounts with regard to the general exports of the country. We heard on a former day, when the right honourable gentleman opened the ways and means of the year, accounts given of the amount of the exports of British manufactures in the years 1792, 1793, 1794. We were then told that the amount of British exports in the year 1792 was upwards of eighteen millions sterling—That the exports of British manu-

factures in the year 1793 were less than those of the year 1792, by the sum of four millions; and that the exports of British manufactures in the year 1794 exceeded those of 1793 by two millions, and consequently were only two millions short of 1792. Now the loss in the first year of the war being two-ninths of the whole exports of British manufactures, must strike at the very root of our commerce. This is a loss which must impress every man, and must go to affect the very basis of our prosperity. The circumstance of the exports of British manufactures last year being two millions more than they were in 1793, is easily to be accounted for. I appeal to those gentlemen who are best acquainted with the commercial districts of the kingdom, whether it was not in a great measure owing to the sanguine speculations of some gentlemen in consequence of our lately acquired possessions in the French West India islands. I would ask those who are acquainted with the county palatine of Lancaster, what has been the diminution of population since the commencement of the present war. I have seen papers myself, the contents of which, if this inquiry goes on, I shall state to the house. According to those papers the diminution of population and of manufactures in Manchester and its neighbourhood was to a degree that would astonish the house. We have no very accurate mode in Great Britain of ascertaining the population of the country. We have no better method than by taking the number of marriages and baptisms. I have seen papers with regard to a great number of parishes in the most populous part of the county I have mentioned, Lancashire; and the state of diminution, taken from a calculation of marriages and baptisms, is in some places one half, in others one third, and in none less than one fourth: but in all a constant diminution, and in the largest parish of Manchester, the diminution is estimated at one half, that is, reduced from an hundred to fifty, and that to a number so large as to make the total diminution of the inhabitants amount to about twelve thousand. That this should be the consequence of

the war is exceedingly natural. But I would ask the house whether, when we are risking every thing, and when the very existence of the country is at stake, it does not become them to ascertain the truth, which can only be done by an inquiry into the true state of our population and of our manufactures, instead of trusting to the absurd and idle expressions of the inexhaustible resources of the country in wealth and population. The information we might receive from a serious inquiry into the real state of our population, might induce us to change our means, or perhaps to change our object.

Now, sir, another part of the resources of this country is our trade and commerce, as distinguished from our manufactures. With respect to the trade of this country, when I made a motion last year for an inquiry into the conduct of the admiralty; after taking considerable pains in stating a great variety of instances, where, as I conceived, the admiralty were highly negligent of their duty in protecting the trade of the country, I received this short answer—"Look to the low rate of ensurance." Having found that to be an argument so powerful with this house, I took some pains to inquire into the state of ensurance, and shall state some circumstances on this subject, which appear to me to afford sufficient ground for going into this inquiry. It may be supposed that the motion respecting the admiralty might give rise to an opinion among the underwriters, that it would induce ministry to be a little more attentive to the protection of our trade in future, so as to make the risk somewhat less. I am not now deciding whether that be true or false; but it certainly was calculated to keep down the rate of ensurance. The fact however is, that ensurance from that time has been uniformly rising, until it has come to its present most enormous rate; a rate so enormous, as the house may perhaps find some difficulty to believe till the fact shall be ascertained by an inquiry. At present, ensurance from this country to Jamaica, and to the other parts of the West Indies, with all the alliances we possess, is as high as it was

in the late American war, when this country had to contend with France, Spain, Holland, and America. With so many powers in confederacy, and France now our single enemy, ensurance to the West Indies is as high as it was at that time when we had so many powers leagued against us, and when the fleets of France and Spain united were confessedly superiour in number to the fleets of Great Britain.

With regard to the Mediterranean trade, strange to tell! at this period, after all that we have expended on the fleet there, ensurance to that quarter is much in the same situation as it was during the last war.

With respect to the trade with Spain and Portugal, the present rate of ensurance will appear to be as high as I have now stated it. With respect to the state of our trade with Spain, I understand that it is totally stopped with some of the ports of that country, on the ground, that ensurance is so high that the trade cannot be carried on. The ensurance from Great Britain to Bilboa, or to Barcelona, is from twenty-five to thirty guineas per cent. and what adds to this is, the merchants are not only obliged to ensure the cargo, but also the premium on it; otherwise it was clear they would only receive 70l. in the hundred: admitting the premium to be from twenty-five to thirty guineas, the real rate of ensurance must then be from thirty-six to thirty-seven per cent. Now, whether it is possible that the trade of this or of any other country can support such a rate of ensurance, is for those who are better acquainted with this subject than I am, to explain. But when you find trade, considered as the principal source of revenue, thus affected by ensurance, it then becomes a matter of material consideration. I believe no trade whatever can go on with this rate of ensurance, and therefore another mode has been adopted. Owing to this high ensurance to Spain and Portugal, a great part of our manufactures have been sent to Hamburgh, and from thence have been conveyed in neutral vessels to Spain and Portugal. The same fatality that has accompanied every part of the war has been felt here; the price of ensurance be-

tween this country and Hamburgh, which was formerly only one or one and a half per cent. has now increased to ten per cent. I have stated ensurance all along as if it were now as good as at any former period; but this is not the case, for reasons which I have already assigned. On the contrary, the trade of ensurance is now almost totally ruined.

There is another circumstance to which it is very material to advert. Formerly when this subject was before the house, facts were stated to show that ensurance was not only very low, but also that it was extremely advantageous to the underwriters. But is not the fact directly the reverse now? Has not the credit of the underwriters been greatly diminished in consequence of the losses they have lately sustained? Although individual underwriters may be found, who will underwrite policies at seven per cent. merchants are willing to pay companies ten per cent. on account of their superiour security. So low is the credit of the underwriters. This clearly shows, that, high as the premium is, it has not been high enough to ensure the underwriters. I mention these facts with respect to ensurance, because without them my argument would have been incomplete. I have not stated the present rate of ensurance, with any view to show how ill our naval force has been employed for the protection of our trade; but I have stated it with this single view, to prove that, by the high price of ensurance, there is every reason to believe that trade and commerce, the great basis on which your revenue and power stand, are affected in a considerable degree; and therefore, that it is of the utmost importance to consider the real state in which we stand at present, in order that we may know our weakness as well as our strength, before we proceed further in this ruinous system.

I now come, sir, to consider of the next point to which I alluded: I mean our connexions with other nations. Surely it is hardly credible that a British house of commons should so far forget their duty as to vote away, of the publick money, sums never be-

fore heard of; and persist in the prosecution of a war, without even knowing whether you have any allies; or, if you have, who they are; what are their situation and circumstances; what their abilities and inclinations. It is material for this house to know who the allies of this country are. I have frequently asked the right honourable gentleman questions with respect to the emperour, and the king of Sardinia; but I have never received any satisfactory answer. Is the king of Prussia an ally of this country, at this moment, or not? Am I to take it for granted, without giving myself the trouble to inquire whether so material a personage is or is not our ally? I know he was your ally by treaty in 1788. I know he was your ally by convention in 1793; and further, that he was your ally by subsidy in 1794. But I asked whether he is your ally at this moment. I wish to ask this question: Did the king of Prussia fulfil the treaty for which the subsidy was granted? If he did, why was it discontinued? If he did not, ought not this house to be apprised of his breach of faith? Ought not this house to be informed of the moment in which he ceased to be our ally? It is indispensably necessary for the honour of this country, that this house should have a perfect knowledge of the whole of this business; for without that knowledge we cannot pass a judgment, we cannot declare an opinion on the conduct of the king of Prussia. If when we go into this inquiry we shall find that he has kept his engagements with this country, we shall be enabled to do justice to that much injured monarch. But if, as I suspect, he has not, is it not fit that this house should call to account the king's ministers for having squandered away such immense sums of the publick money? An inquiry, in every point of view, will be productive of advantage; for, by going into a committee, we shall be enabled to see distinctly whether the king of Prussia has fulfilled his treaties; and, if he has, I am sure this house will be disposed to do ample justice to so good a prince. But if the contrary shall turn out to be the case; if it appear that he has notoriously failed

in the performance of his engagements, is it not material that this house should declare its indignation at such a conduct to its constituents, and to the nations of Europe; and show that they will not tamely suffer themselves to be so played upon, and so duped, by any prince in future? If the king of Prussia is no longer an ally of ours, what becomes of his other treaties? Let me remind the house, that the king of Prussia was to send into the field 62,000 men, but you were only to pay for 30,000 men. In consequence of the treaty of 1788, he was to furnish you with 32,000 men without any additional subsidy; what then has become of that treaty? We readily gave a subsidy to the king of Prussia to furnish us with 30,000 men. He was bound by a former treaty to furnish us with 32,000 men for nothing: but it now turns out that we have not only lost the 30,000 men we subsidized, but we have also lost the 32,000 we were to have for nothing, in virtue of his previous engagements. You give him millions more than you originally stipulated; but instead of receiving more, you lose the whole. Now I ask, is such conduct to be born? And are we to be told of the advantages to be derived from alliance with regular governments, and of the dependance to be placed on the regular government of Prussia? France is not a regular government, and we have heard much of the danger of treating in any shape with her. But Prussia, you were told, you may relay on; and the result has been, that instead of having what you stipulated and paid for in the last instance, you lose what you were entitled to by previous agreement. And, notwithstanding this flagrant conduct of the king of Prussia, a British house of commons consents to squander away the wealth of this country, to lose the whole army supposed to be purchased by it, merely because the minister chooses to say, he is not informed of the particulars of the breach of that treaty. The question now is, whether this matter is to be inquired into or not? The minister adds, that even admitting that the king of Prussia has not sent into the field the armies

he undertook to send, it is not thence, in fairness of reasoning to be inferred, that our other allies will not be faithful to their engagements. I have heard it asserted in this house, that the king of Prussia continued to execute part of his stipulation for a considerable time, and that the payment, on our part, was discontinued when he failed in the performance of his engagement. It was asserted by an honourable baronet, that the part he acted was more beneficial to the common cause, than if he had strictly and literally conformed to the terms of the treaty. Let this curious assertion be inquired into and ascertained. If it shall be proved, let the house do their duty, and render justice to that ill treated monarch; let them declare that ministers have acted towards him with treachery and injustice; or if not, let them do justice to ministers, and declare that their conduct has been wise and upright.

But, sir, at this moment, I have no perfect means of information as to what we have to look for in the prosecution of the war. I have read in some of the newspapers that the king of Prussia is sending a large army to the Rhine, and in others, that he considers the Rhine as a proper boundary for France. It was said that he was marching towards Westphalia against the French, and by others that he was marching against the allies. We ought to know precisely the truth. I wish to know what probability there is that he will be our ally, or that he will be our enemy, or that he will remain in a state of neutrality? What demands have been made from this country with a view to an explanation, and in what manner has he treated the applications of the British ministry for that purpose? I want to know what communications have passed, and what remonstrances have been made: for remonstrances must have been made, or ministers must have grossly neglected their duty.

The treaty of 1788 was a defensive treaty. France declared war against us; and therefore, say the gentlemen on the other side of the house, we were forced into the war by their aggression. I confess I shall

doubt their sincerity, unless they have called upon the king of Prussia to perform his treaty. Although his majesty's ministers might say to the king of Prussia: "We have been attacked by France, and therefore call upon you to assist us, agreeably to your treaty;" that monarch might have replied, "No: I know better, though you have procured a confiding parliament to say so, you were the aggressors, and therefore I am not bound in consequence of my treaty, which was only defensive, to furnish you with 30,000 men." I ask the British house of commons, whether they can so far lull their consciences to rest, and so scandalously betray their constituents, as to go on in these circumstances without inquiring what the conduct of the king of Prussia has been to this country, and reciprocally what our conduct has been to him. I warn the house of the mischief which may follow, if they thus go on in the prosecution of the war without taking the means to come to a decision upon this subject.

There is another answer which may possibly be made by the king of Prussia in vindication of his conduct, and which would explain the assertion of the honourable baronet. He may say: "The object of this war was not the saving or gaining of this or that particular province, the capture of a town, or the recovery of a fortress. The object of it was the suppression of those Jacobin principles that were subverting all regular governments." He may say, as had been stated by the honourable baronet: "I have done better for you than you have done for yourselves. It was essential to crush Jacobin principles in Poland. You fought for morality, religion, and the order of society. I fought to suppress those anarchical principles which went to the destruction of all regular governments. Who was of the greatest service to the common cause—he that took a town, a city, a fortress, or an island—or he that prevented Jacobin principles from taking root in Poland, and dashed the cup of rising freedom from the lips of that abominable people?" The destruction of even one

man, the destruction of Kosciusko, who by his character gave credit to the cause of liberty, and by the ardour of his zeal animated the sacred flame in every congenial bosom throughout Europe. What signified the recovery of Flanders or the preservation of Holland to the capture of Kosciusko? The destruction of this man, and with him of the seeds of growing liberty, tended more to the advantage of the real cause of the confederacy, than any cooperation with their troops, which might have been the means of saving Holland or of recovering Brabant."

If so, the country should know, through the medium of this house, that his majesty's ministers have advanced twelve hundred thousand pounds to the king of Prussia, to enable him to subdue Poland; for without our assistance he could not have effected what he has done in that country; and if he had not been employed in that quarter, he would have done as much for the common cause against France as he has done, *which is just nothing*. Does it not become us to inquire into this business, in order that we may drive disgrace from ourselves to those on whom it ought to attach?

The king of Prussia, I suppose, is no longer to be considered as our ally: but if he is—I have spoken of his inclination—let us now look to his ability, and consider how far he is to be depended upon. From an authentick paper, I find him stating to the diet of the empire his situation; in which he declares it is utterly impossible for him to continue this war. He announced, about twelve months ago, that he had actually begun to withdraw his troops from the Rhine homewards, on the ground of his incapacity (in a pecuniary point of view) to support such large armies; and he continued to withdraw his troops until he received assistance from us. It is therefore clear, that without additional pecuniary aid from this country, whether willing or unwilling, he is totally incapable of prosecuting the war; and therefore, if we are to look upon him as an ally, he must be subsidized or hired; nay possibly we may be obliged to purchase

his neutrality—and even in that case I know not but he may make you pay for every man of his troops. Therefore, whether you look on the king of Prussia as I do, as much more likely to assist the French than to cooperate with you, at all events you must consider him as a person gone off from the alliance, and wholly to be bought anew. I shall therefore no longer consider him as an ally.

I now come to our great friend, the emperour. I am told that it is most unjust indeed to reason from Prussia to Austria, or from Leopold to Francis; and that the present emperour is a personage of unsullied integrity; that we are not to judge of him from the character of some of his predecessors; and that we are to consider the court of Vienna as completely unblemished in point of honour. We find that the emperour has made declarations nearly to the same effect as those of the king of Prussia. In the declarations published by the prince of Cobourg, he says to the people of Germany, "You must take your plate from your tables; you must take your plate from your altars; you must collect all your valuables, whewhether profane or sacred; you must put all the property you possess in a state of requisition; for without such extraordinary exertions the emperour cannot carry on the war." But, it may be said, we will enable him to come forward with a large force, by granting, in aid of his resources, a loan of four or six millions. Now, if the emperour, either from inclination or inability, should fail in his engagements, and should, contrary to his character of good faith, neglect to perform his treaty, we have not even the miserable tie on him which we had on the king of Prussia. When the emperour ceases to perform his treaty we cannot stop our payments, because the emperour says, "Give me it all at once." Our money therefore is absolutely necessary to enable him to stir in the first instance, and therefore if, from either want of ability or any other circumstance, he should fail to perform his treaty, it is most obvious that the whole money which we advance him must be totally

and irrecoverably lost. And further, if so large a sum is necessary to enable his imperial majesty to act in the present campaign, will not an equal or a larger sum be wanted for the next campaign, if the war should continue? And therefore gentlemen must clearly see that the whole of the expense and burthen of the war will fall on this miserable and devoted country. At the period we entered upon this war we were promised the assistance of all Europe; and now it is found that, in less than twenty-four months, the whole burthen of the war devolves on Great Britain.

But we have other allies. We have allies in Italy and Spain. But although we pay great subsidies to the Italian princes, we have scarcely heard of a movement in that quarter. Indeed, were we to consult the London Gazette for the year 1794, we might suppose Spain and Italy to be neutral powers, as it does not take the least notice of their military operations during that period. With respect to the king of Sardinia, our first ally in Italy, whatever gentlemen may have thought in different periods of this war, it is possible, if he had enjoyed a real and *bona fide* neutrality, it would have been much more beneficial to this country than any diversion which he has been able to make. With regard to those attempted in the south of France, what advantage the cause of the allies has reaped from those diversions I am at a loss to discover, and I believe this house is yet equally to learn.

We have another ally—the king of Spain. Now what is the state of Spain? It is of importance for us to turn our regards to the present situation of that country. A great part of its north-eastern provinces have already been conquered by France. Bilboa and Barcelona are in a considerable degree of danger. Do you look then to a Spanish monarchy as possessed of any force to act against France with effect? or is it not that part of the alliance which is the most weak, and on which it is likely the French will soon make such an impression, as ultimately to decide the whole fate of the war in that kingdom? I was told there was such a fund of vigour in that country, as would

make them rise in a mass against France. When that came to the trial, there was no cause which apparently so much contributed to the failure, or afforded such strong ground of suspicion, as the individual treachery of the officers of the king of Spain. In no quarter was there so much cause for jealousy or of a want of disposition to resist the French. It may be asked, was Figueres taken by the French? or did it not surrender? It is extremely probable that French intrigue upon this occasion has operated more than French force. It was also supposed that the bigoted attachment of the Spaniards to the Roman Catholick religion would inspire them with vigour against the French, who are supposed to have trampled upon all religion; but was this the case? We know the reverse to be the fact.

But what is the state of Spain in other respects? Of all parts of Spain, there is none in which there is so much vigour, and so much real force, as in Catalonia; into the heart of which the French have penetrated. What was the history of that people? When the French had, by their arms, made a considerable progress in this province, the people of Barcelona determined to resist their further progress, and to undertake their own defence. Accordingly they sent a deputation to that effect to Madrid, stating that they wished to undertake the defence of the country, and that they would defend it to the last drop of their blood, provided that no Spanish troops were sent to their assistence, except some particular regiments, which they specified, and with which they were acquainted, and provided an assembly of the state was called. This deputation received no answer; or rather, they received a direct refusal; and the French found but too easy a conquest in that province. I mention this to show to you that Spain is not a country to be depended upon, and that she is one of the weakest of your allies.

The king of Sardinia and the king of Spain were to have made different diversions in aid of the confederacy. The king of Sardinia undertook to make

a diversion in Dauphiny, and at this moment the French are masters of Nice and Savoy.—Spain engaged to make a diversion in Roussillon, and the French are now in possession of Navarre, Biscay, and Catalonia. All these allies, therefore, upon whose exertions so much dependance was placed by the ministers of this country, are now only so many dead weights upon our treasury.

Are the Spaniards in a much better situation in regard to their finances? It is true they have not yet called upon this country for subsidy; but they must soon either make that application, or, what will be much more beneficial for themselves, make a separate peace with France. They have had recourse to measures of finance, of a very extraordinary nature. I shall name one of them. Gentlemen will recollect that an honourable friend of mine, not long ago, made a motion in this house for laying a moderate tax on all offices and employments under government during the war. The house will recollect with what ridicule that motion was received. It was considered as a paltry resource, to which no nation, that was not utterly exhausted in its finances, ought to resort. But what has the king of Spain done? The Spanish court has laid a duty of four per cent. universally upon every person enjoying any office in Spain above one hundred and fifty pounds per annum, and a tax of twenty-five per cent. upon the salaries of all his counsellors of state, for the support of the present war. I am not commending this resource. I am only stating it, to show what the situation is of Spain with respect to her finances; and how little the allies can rely on that country for support in the prosecution of the war. This is the true situation of our allies, according to the best information which I have been able to procure; and is not this an additional argument for going into an inquiry into the state of the nation, in order to ascertain distinctly, from authentick documents, the precise degree of dependance we ought to have on our connexions with other powers?

I shall next proceed to the consideration of our conduct in a different point of view; and examine what strength we have derived from the estimation which rectitude and dignity, moderation and justice, might have procured us in the eyes of Europe. I am one of those who firmly believe, as much indeed as man can believe any thing, that the greatest resource a nation can possess, the surest principle of power, is strict attention to the principles of justice. I firmly believe that the common proverb, of honesty being the best policy, is as applicable to nations as to individuals; that this, which the conviction of mankind has made an axiom, is universally true; and that cases which may sometimes be supposed exceptions, arise from our taking narrow views of the subject, and being unable at once to comprehend the whole. If therefore we have been deficient in justice towards other states, we have been deficient in wisdom, and have enfeebled our arm in our efforts against the enemy. Justice is fairly to be ranked among the number of our resources; and it is the duty of the house to look back, and inquire whether or not our conduct, since the commencement of the war, has been such as to entitle us to the good opinion of the wise and observing part of mankind. I am not now going to discuss the justice of entering into the war; but I wish to call the attention of the house to the conduct of the king's ministers in prosecuting it. For whatever might have been the motives which induced ministers to enter upon it, the means they have employed in carrying it on are fit subjects for examination in this house. When we entered upon this war, we were sanguine enough to suppose that all the civilized part of the world would see it with the same eyes as we did. When I represented in this house, that the plan of starving France adopted by ministers was absurd and impracticable, for that France would receive supplies from neutral nations; when I stated the means by which neutral nations might supply France; I was answered, that in this war the neutral nations would be very few, if any. But what is

the case at the end of two years? The neutral nations are many and increasing; and that the great neutral nation, America, has continued neutral from the beginning. It is of infinite importance to a nation that respects its honour, that even respects its interest, which is inseparable from its honour, to gain the good opinion of surrounding nations for justice, magnanimity, and moderation. Has Great Britain done this, or the reverse? What has been your conduct to Sweden, to Denmark, to Genoa, to Tuscany, to Switzerland, to America while you durst? I do not speak of any particular minister at foreign courts; for many of those ministers I feel great respect, and with some of them I am connected by friendship. I am ready to admit that, if they acted contrary to their instructions, or on their own mere suggestions without instructions, Ministers at home are not responsible for their conduct; but I am persuaded that they did act according to their instructions; for, if they did not, ministers here were bound to recall them, and disavow what they had done. I however can at present state only my own belief; an inquiry will enable us to ascertain the facts beyond dispute.

With respect to America I shall say nothing at present, except that, after giving orders for taking her ships, we recalled those orders, and have since entered into a treaty by which we agree, properly I believe, justly, and if justly, wisely, to pay for the rashness and folly of issuing them. Next, with regard to Denmark and Sweden, which were in this case so intimately connected in point of interest, that whatever was addressed to the one might be considered in fact, although not in form, as addressed to the other. To the court of Copenhagen we presented memorial after memorial, couched in the most peevish and offensive terms of remonstrance, on the neutrality of his Danish majesty. These memorials were answered by the minister, Mr. Bernstoff, with such temper, firmness, and diplomatick knowledge, as obliged us at length to desist, and raised his character higher than that of any Danish minister ever

was before. We engaged in a diplomatick contest upon the subject of neutrality, in which we showed our complete ignorance of the rights of neutral nations, and were foiled accordingly.

What has been our conduct towards the Grand Duke of Tuscany, a prince, who, although belonging to one of the most illustrious families of Europe, is known not to be possessed of any great military power? Lord Hervey goes to the Grand Duke of Tuscany—not to the emperour, the king of Prussia, or any potent monarch—and says to him "Can you pretend to maintain neutrality with such a government as that of France?"—calling the French government all the hard names which regular governments think themselves authorized to bestow upon it; and not recollecting that one of the heaviest accusations against the French was their having presumed to intermeddle in the internal politicks of other nations—"Can you basely refuse joining the league against the murderers of your aunt, and declared enemies of your whole family, and the avowed subverters of all established government, order, and religion? I know to what cause your hesitation is owing. It is because you give credit to bad ministers; it is because you lend too favourable an ear to the advice of your minister Manfredini, a man who has gained a pernicious ascendancy over your mind, but who ought no longer to have any share in your councils." Lord Hervey, after thus telling an independent prince that he was not to listen to the advice of his own ministers, might with equal propriety have gone on to tell him that he ought to be guided solely by the counsels of the right honourable gentleman over against me. "Your ministers," he might have said, "are ignorant and incapable; the British ministers are wise and able. Observe into what a situation they have brought their own country, and you cannot doubt with what wisdom and vigour they will consult for yours."—This language of Lord Hervey has never been disavowed by ministers. It has even been imitated by his successour, and therefore I must consider it as having

been the language of his instructions—and thus by menace and insult was the grand duke of Tuscany compelled to renounce his system of neutrality, contrary to his own inclination, to the advice of his ministers, and the interests of his people. Such was the conduct of ministers when we were powerful in the Mediterranean. Lord Hervey was at length recalled, and another gentleman whom I personally respect was appointed in his stead, and instructed to follow the same course. At last, after we lose our power in the Mediterranean—when events turn out against us—we submit not only to the neutrality of the duke of Tuscany, but to his concluding a treaty of peace and amity with the French republick.

In Switzerland, Lord Robert Fitzgerald, for whose character I have too high a respect to suppose that he would exceed the letter of his instructions, in the name of the king of Great Britain, tells the independent Swiss cantons, in the language of insult and injustice: "That he will not decide, whether justice and their true interest permit them to remain neuter, against those who would again reduce them to barbarism, in a war of almost all the powers of Europe, in a war where not only the existence of every established government, but even that of all kind of property is at stake. He will only observe, that neutrality itself will not authorize any correspondence, directly or indirectly, with the factious or their agents." He tells them in effect, that although they may call themselves neutral, they are not to allow their subjects to reap the benefits of that neutrality by intercourse with France. Who made you the arbiters how far intercourse ought to be allowed by independent states between their respective subjects? Where did you get the right? or, if you have the right, where is your power to enforce it? The Swiss cantons return a civil and dignified answer: "That a rigid and exact neutrality was the invariable maxim of their ancestors; and having received it as a sacred inheritance, they conceive it their duty to abide by it. That they trust his Britannick majesty, following the example of his

illustrious ancestors, will respect the independence of the Helvetick Confederacy." In the mean time, they carry on their intercourse with France in as high a degree as it is their interest to do, regardless of our menaces; and we have now the mortification to feel that the coarseness of our insult was equalled only by its impotence. We have nothing to boast of, but the rashness of our design, and the meanness of the attempt to carry it into execution.

What has been your conduct towards Genoa? Ministers hold the same language towards that state, and tell them: "If you continue in your neutrality, it must be offensive to the combined powers, and may give occasion to revive claims which must lead to disagreeable consequences". A meaner threat never was employed. Who are the parties in this mighty contest? Great Britain, taking upon herself to dictate for all the combined powers, and the republick of Genoa. This country not only admonishes the republick of Genoa against observing a neutrality, but threatens her with war if she does. Look at this, and see a picture of insolence, injustice, and meanness, exceeded only by the feebleness of the attempt to follow it up! The fortune of war being against you, even the little republick of Genoa is stout; and after blockading her port, you are content to withdraw your ships, and forced to submit to her neutrality with an ungracious apology for the injustice you have done. By such conduct you have impaired the character of the nation for justice and magnanimity, and given to Great Britain a character of meanness and insolence which was never before imputed to her, a character which has destroyed more countries than the loss of armies. To put this in a stronger point of view, contrast it with your conduct to America. Did you tell America that all intercouse with France was disgraceful, until France should restore her king? No! It is only to the weak and defenceless that you talk big. To the great and powerful you apologize, and agree to pay for all the injustice you have done them.

Examine the law of nations. If any one question in the law of nations be clearer and more generally acknowledged than another, it is that of a right in every nation, which no treaty obliges to the contrary, to preserve a complete neutrality. Consider the sacredness of this right, and the miserable condition of every weak country, if whenever great powers go to war, for what they may call the cause of justice, order, religion, and regular government, but what others may think views of ambition and aggrandizement, every weak prince, every petty republick, were to be compelled to take a part in the contest. If such were to be the condition of society; if men were not allowed to enjoy that neutrality which their independence entitles them to, they would begin to doubt the benefits of society, and listen to the paradoxes of those who maintain, that all established rules and principles are founded in ignorance and errour; and that society itself, as at present constituted, is not worth preserving.

If the house agree to a committee of inquiry, I shall move that his majesty's ministers do lay before us the correspondence between them and their agents at foreign courts; not for the purpose of injuring or punishing individuals, if it should appear that any of them have deviated from their instructions, but for the purpose of saving the credit and honour of ministers themselves. If it should turn out, as I believe it will, that our ambassadours at foreign courts have acted consistently with the letter and spirit of their instructions, that they have only used the words and sentiments of the cabinet of Great Britain; then it will become this house to show that ministers are not the nation, and that whatever may be their principles, the principles of the nation are justice and magnanimity. It will then become us to show to our constituents and to all Europe, that we would rather hold high language to the strong and powerful than to the weak and defenceless. That instead of insulting and injuring the weaker states of Europe, our inclination is to protect them against the greatest and most pow-

erful. It will also become us to wipe off from ourselves the stigma arising from the meanness, insolence, pusillanimity, and injustice, which have been manifested on our part towards the particular states I have mentioned.

I shall now, sir, without considering whether this war was justly or unjustly undertaken, proceed to examine with what wisdom, and upon what principles, it has been conducted. In doing this I will pass by all the considerations that ought to have preceded our determination to go to war, great and important as in my mind they were, and suppose war actually resolved upon. When we had come to this resolution, was it not, I ask, of the utmost consequence to our success that the object of the war should be clear? No two things can be more distinct from each other than fighting for a country and fighting against it. If ministers had acted up to the character of statesmen, they would have taken one or other side of this alternative, with all its advantages and disadvantages, for advantages and disadvantages each of them must have had. They would have said one of two things: either "We are going to war with France, not on account of her form of government; we care not what form of government is established in France. It is of no consequence to us whether that country be governed by a monarch, a convention, or a jacobin club: this is no cause of war. But we go to war against France to protect our allies the Dutch, and to avenge the insults she has offered to the British nation:" though I confess I know of no insult offered to the British nation previous to the commencement of this war. Or they might have taken a very different course; they might have adopted the idea of a right honourable gentleman who is not now a member of this house, of whose great genius and distinguished character, although I have lately had the misfortune to differ from him in political opinion, I shall never speak but in terms of the highest respect and admiration. They might have taken the course pointed out by that right

honourable gentleman,* who, by an odd figure,† said: "We are not fighting for the Scheldt; we are fighting for France; we are fighting for the destruction of the greatest evil that ever threatened the civilized world, the French revolution; we are fighting for the restoration of monarchy in France; we are fighting for the reestablishment of regular government; to restore the emigrants to their property that has been confiscated; we are fighting for the French nation against the French convention, not for weakening France and aggrandizing Great Britain; we are fighting for our own constitution, our monarchy, our laws, our religion, our property; for unless monarchy be restored in France, monarchy will not be safe in other parts of the world; his majesty will not be safe upon his throne. Unless their property be restored to the emigrants, the property of every man in this house is insecure." When I say his majesty's ministers determined on the prosecution of this war, they should have made choice of one or other side of this alternative, each of which, as I have just stated, would have had its inconveniences. If you had chosen the former, and said: "In going to war with France, we wish to have nothing to do with the nature of her government; we are totally indifferent about her internal situation, and only fight to compel her to make atonement for insults offered to us; it would have been attended with this inconvenience, you would have had no pretence for expecting the assistance of any French emigrants, or of insurgents in any part of France, except in as far as by resisting the convention, and endeavouring to promote their own views, they might, without intending it, facilitate the accomplishment of yours. You would have had no claim upon the inhabitants of La Vendée, of Britany, Lyons, Marseilles, or any other place where hatred of the

* Mr. Burke.

† The figure, which Mr. Fox did not repeat, was, "A war about the Scheldt, a war about a chamber pot."

convention provoked insurrection, because neither with them nor with the French emigrants would you have had any common cause, nor could you have been understood to offer them protection. You would have had no right to look for the cooperation of those powers, whose object was the restoration of Louis XVII to the throne of his ancestors. But, on the other hand, you would have had, what, in my opinion, would have fully compensated all these disadvantages. You would have quarrelled with France on equal terms, and fought with her upon known principles. France could not then have made the efforts she has made. If you had set out with the recognition of the French Republick, and declared that you wished to have no concern with her internal affairs; and I ask you this question: Can you imagine it would have been possible for France, in consequence of enthusiasm or terrour, or of both combined, to have raised and supported such immense armies, whose vigour and exertions have astonished Europe? Could terrour have compelled such exertions and such sacrifices, when the people of France knew that they were only fighting for the Scheldt or Brabant, or some island in the West Indies? Do you think it possible, if such had been the object of the war, for you to have raised up against you what has been emphatically called, and emphatically felt, an armed nation? Would the convention have been able to persuade them that they were fighting for their liberties, their lives, for every thing that is dear to the heart of man; that they had no choice but victory or death, when they were clearly and distinctly told by us, that the whole contest was about the navigation of the Scheldt, and the security of Holland? But when the whole people of France, in consequence of the declarations of Great Britain, were convinced that their future government, and their very existence as an independent nation were attacked, then they began to rouse themselves; then they began to unite in defence of what they conceived to be their just rights and liberties; and under the influence of this conviction it was, that they produced

those effects which have astonished the world, and which are unparalleled in the history of nations. If Great Britain at the outset of the war had clearly convinced France, that her only object was the protection of her allies, and the vindication of her own honour, no such effects could possibly have been produced. If, on the other hand, the aid of the French emigrants and insurgents in France had been thought an advantage superiour to all this, you might have taken the other part of the alternative, and said: "Our object in going to war is to establish a regular form of government in France." The inconvenience here would have been, that from the very moment of making this declaration, you would have had united against you every republican in France, in that vigorous way in which you now see them united. You would have persuaded them, as you have done, that they had no other chance for liberty, than by uniting as an armed nation, with activity and vigour. If you had said at the outset: "We wish not to dismember France; we wish not to partition her territory; we wish not to weaken or diminish her power, or to aggrandize Great Britain at her expense; our sole object is to restore to her the blessings of a regular government, and to good citizens the enjoyment of their rights and property. In that case you would have had this advantage, every emigrant from France in every part of the world, would have felt in common with the British cause. Every French loyalist would have felt, and would have gone hand and heart with the British nation. Even such republicans as disliked the sytem of terrour, more than they disliked monarchy, would have exerted themselves in your favour. You would then have had a fair opportunity of trying the question: "What were the sentiments of the people of France with respect to the revolution; and whether a majority of the nation wished for a monarchy or a republick." You would have reared a standard to which Frenchmen who loved their country might repair. Now, by indulging the childish hope of gaining the advantages of each side

of the alternative, you have gained the advantages of neither; you have lost the advantages of both. How could it be otherwise? When you took Valenciennes, instead of taking it for Louis XVII, you took possession of it in the name of the emperour *Francis*. When Condé surrendered, you did the same thing. When Mentz surrendered, the garrison was dismissed to be employed against the royalists of La Vendée. Was it possible for any man to be so ignorant, as to doubt what your intentions were? How then was it possible for you to suppose that your conduct would produce on the inhabitants of France, an effect different from what it has done? When Sir Charles Grey and Sir John Jervis took Martinique, Guadaloupe, and the rest of the French West India islands, did they take possession of them for Louis XVII? No! but for the king of Great Britain, not to be restored to France when monarchy and regular government should be restored, but to be retained as conquests, if the chance of war should leave them in our hands. While such was our conduct in all parts of the world, could it be hoped that any French emigrant, whose situation was not desperate indeed, would join us; or that all who were lovers of royalty would not be our enemies? To attend to justice is in all cases peculiarly important; and the love of country is a motive so powerful, as to be often used as a pretext, even by those who do not feel it. The royalists of La Vendée, of Britany, and other places, took the field, and held out long and bravely; but what could they say to the people of France? What could they put in their manifestos, of equal weight with the addresses from the convention? They might say, "If we conquer, the French monarchy will be restored; but it will be restored with the territory of France curtailed and diminished, one third of it, perhaps, divided among rival powers, and we may lose our rank and situation, in the number of nations." The convention could say, "If we conquer, the French republick will remain entire, a great and independent nation, triumphant over all the powers who have confederated

against her liberties." With such discouragements one the one hand, and such flattering prospects on the other, was it to be expected that any considerable number of emigrants, or of Frenchmen of any description, would connect their own cause with that of the allies? We have so shuffled in our professions, and have been guilty of such duplicity, that no description of Frenchmen will flock to our standard. It was a fatal errour in the commencement of the war, that we did not state clearly how far we meant to enter into the cause of the French emigrants; and how far to connect ourselves with powers who, from their previous conduct, might well be suspected of other views than that of restoring monarchy in France. It may, perhaps, be said, that we could not be certain in the first instance how far it might be proper to interfere in the internal affairs of France; that we must watch events, and act accordingly. By this want of clearness with respect to our ultimate intentions, we have lost more than any contingency could ever promise. All obscurity ought to have been removed, and you ought to have clearly and distinctly adopted one or other side of the alternative I have stated. Every place was not taken for the allies. It was understood by those who surrendered Toulon to Lord Hood, that he accepted it on this condition—that he was to adhere to the constitution of 1789. Whether ministers intended to observe that condition I know not; but in their subsequent publications they gave reason to hope that they did. In their declarations they offered peace and protection to all well disposed Frenchmen, who should join in restoring monarchy, without specifying what kind of monarchy. Have you fulfilled that promise? What kind of protection have you afforded to those who endeavoured to restore monarchy? Have not the royalists, for want of assistance or encouragement, been obliged, however reluctantly, to submit to the laws of the republick? If the allies had been fighting either for France, or against France, what should have been their conduct towards La Fayette and Du-

mourier? The seizure of La Fayette, by the Austrians, was contrary to the law of nations, and their treatment of him must damn their fame to all eternity, and render their name an object of universal execration. They found him, and the companions of his misfortune, not at the head of an army, nor in arms, and took them against all the laws of nations and of war—not to be treated as prisoners of war, but as prisoners to be consigned to a dungeon. If the allies were fighting against France, surely they ought not to have treated as criminals, generals coming over to them from the enemy. Dumourier came over when he thought he had great power with his army. That power turned out to be much less than he had imagined; but it was impossible that a man who had served his country with so much reputation, with so much ability and success, should not have had a considerable party in it. How was he treated? When they found that he could not bring along with him so large a portion of his army as they expected, after having extolled his virtue, at the moment when he had rendered his virtue at least doubtful, they drove him from them a wandering fugitive, as if they had passed a decree expressly forbidding any French general to abandon the standard of the republick in future. By acting in this manner, as is very well expressed in a French pamphlet I have read, "we are more unaccountable in our political conduct than any of the most bigoted religious sects, for we even exclude converts;" which I believe was never done by any sectarists. Our conduct therefore, in this respect, is perfectly new: for after Dumourier becomes a convert to, and espouses the cause of the allies, they refuse to receive him. But if we and our allies were fighting for France against the convention, we ought to have praised this general as a convert; we ought to have received him with cordiality; and held him up as an example for the conversion of others. If we were fighting against France, we should have considered all Frenchmen as enemies, in the common acception of the term, and not by denouncing

vengeance for crimes committed in France, as was done by lord Auckland, in a paper published at the Hague, have given ground for that enthusiasm of resistance, which inflames the minds of men who conceive their lives to be attacked: an enthusiasm which has united for common defence those who, in every moment of respite, were tearing one another to pieces, and sending their opponents to the scaffold, whenever they could supplant them in power. If the allies were fighting for France, the restoration of monarchy, and regular government, I mean not to say that they should have granted impunity to those who were more immediately the cause of the murder of the king: but they ought not to have begun with thundering forth a manifesto,* threatening Paris with military execution, and even total destruction; denouncing vengeance which necessarily alarmed all men, as no man was named; a manifesto which we cannot even now endure to read, but by contrasting the pride and cruelty of the menace with the impotence of the attempt at putting it in execution. If we were fighting for France, we ought to have assured the people of France that we had no views of aggrandizement, much less of dismembering the kingdom, or taking vengeance of the inhabitants. We ought to have convinced them that we entered France, not to conquer, but to restore; and the very first step should have been to publish a general amnesty, with some exceptions. A whole nation may be misled, but cannot be all guilty, as has been said by the great man already mentioned, "I know not how to draw an indictment against a whole nation." Some exceptions to the general amnesty might have been necessary; but these should have been mentioned by name, that others might have had nothing to fear. By this mode of proceeding, many persons deserving of punishment might have escaped; but this would not have been so bad as terrifying all the people of France individually, by indiscriminate threats. This I conceive to be a fundamental errour.

* Duke of Brunswick.

I would therefore have the house go into an inquiry, that we may declare this errour to be fundamental, if so it shall appear to be; that we may take some intelligible ground for our future conduct; define clearly and distinctly the object of the war, and put the remaining quarrel with France upon such a footing, as to show whether we are really fighting for France as a nation, or against her. Is there a man who believes that, to define our object, and to demand it of the French government, even at the price of recognising that government (as far as to negotiate is a recognition) would render it more difficult to be obtained by force of arms, if the French should refuse to grant it? Does the right honourable gentleman himself believe that, if the convention were to refuse reasonable terms of peace, they would be able to call forth such extraordinary exertions on the part of the people for continuing the war, as the general persuasion of the people that they have no alternative but conquest or subjugation has hitherto enabled them to call forth?

Having mentioned these great and fundamental errours, it is hardly necessary to enter into those that are more minute. It is almost sufficient to name them. If we took possession of Toulon, not with a view to conquest, but with the intention of supporting the cause of monarchy in France, it was the most important advantage we could have obtained, and to the preservation and improvement of which all our attention ought to have been directed. Yet we left Toulon with a very small English force, trusting its defence to the aid of allies, who were either unable or unwilling to defend it. This was said to be done for the sake of an expedition against the French West India islands, an expedition of much less importance than the defence of Toulon; and that expedition was again crippled by collecting troops under the Earl of Moira for a descent upon the coast of France: a descent for which an opportunity has never yet been found; and therefore government has never been able in any way to avail itself of

the force so collected. In consequence of this Toulon was lost; and a number of troops was sent to the West Indies, sufficient indeed, through the zeal and ability of the commanders, to take the islands, but not sufficient to keep them. Guadaloupe we know is gone; there is little hope of our being now in possession of any part of St. Domingo; and we are far from being without well-grounded apprehensions for the safety of Martinico and the other conquered islands.

With respect to the last campaign, our great and leading errour was, confidence in the king of Prussia, in the Belgians, and in the Dutch. It was evident *a priori* that our confidence was ill founded, and *a posteriori* it has proved to be so. We told the people of the Austrian Netherlands that we were fighting for their religion, and the people of the United Provinces, that we were fighting for their liberties; but they did not believe us. We forced the Dutch into a war, which they had no inclination to undertake. So early as the beginning of the year 1793, I stated it as my opinion, that the Dutch would not demand our assistance. I was answered, that they durst not demand it, but that this was no reason for withholding it, and that, if it was offered, they would not refuse it. I replied, that I believed the case to be exactly the reverse, and that if you offered your assistance, although the Dutch did not desire it, yet they durst not refuse it. I also find, at an early period of the war, the people of Frizeland putting up their prayers to Almighty God, to deliver them from this war, into which they had been plunged by their allies. All that has happened since has confirmed my opinion. While we were fighting in the Austrian Netherlands, the Dutch gave us but feeble and reluctant aid. When we were driven out of the Austrian Netherlands, and the United Provinces were to be defended, the Dutch, instead of rising in a mass to defend them, joined in welcoming the French. We ought to have known beforehand, that the people of the United Provinces wished not to be defended by us, and there-

fore were not to be confided in as allies. We ought to have adopted one of two courses. We should either have withdrawn our mischievous and oppressive protection, and said to the Dutch: "Defend yourselves;" or we should have taken possession of the country with an army, and defended it like a conquered province.

When I look to the naval part of the campaign, I find, that the captures made by the enemy are greater than they were ever known to be in any former war; but I do not find that our trade has increased in the same proportion. By documents, which I conceive to be tolerably correct, it appears that in the second year after France joined in the American war, the number of ships captured by France, Spain, and America, was 499. How many of these were taken by Spain, I do not know; but it is probable that nearly one half of them were taken by the Americans. In the second year of this war, when we have France alone to contend with, the number of ships belonging to Great Britain which have been captured by France amounts to 860. Until I hear this extraordinary difference, under circumstances so much less unfavourable than those of the period to which I have alluded, accounted for, I must conclude that there has been a great defect in the naval administration of this country; either that we have not had a sufficient naval force, or that ministers have not well applied it. His majesty's speech from the throne in January 1794, laid the ground of most forcible arguments for inquiry. That speech, in recapitulating the advantages obtained by the arms of the allied powers, as the pledge and earnest of still greater advantages, almost expressly assured us of the empire of the sea. O the little foresight of presumptuous men! O the fallacy of human hope! Every pledge of success, every topick of consolation held out to us in that speech, is now converted into a circumstance of defeat, into an argument for despair! "The United Provinces," we were told, "have been protected from invasion; the Austrian Netherlands have been recovered and maintained;

places of considerable importance have been acquired on the frontiers of France; an important and decisive blow has been given to their naval power. At sea our superiority has been undisputed, and our commerce so effectually protected that the losses sustained have been inconsiderable, in proportion to its extent, and to the captures made on the contracted trade of the enemy." Yet in the course of a year ushered in with so much promise, our superiority at sea has been disputed; after a second more important and decisive blow given to the enemy's naval power, they have been masters of the sea for two months; and 860 of our ships have been taken. Every hope and expectation held out by that speech is now completely gone. There is not one single ground stated by the king with respect to the probable good events of the war which has not been entirely done away. We have lost the fortresses on the French frontier. We have lost the Austrian Netherlands. We have lost Holland; and the trade of England has been greatly injured. It is not the change of one man; it is not the change of the first lord of the admiralty, that will make satisfaction for the injury sustained by our commerce. I observe likewise that since the commencement of the present war, the recaptures do not bear a greater proportion to the ships taken than they did in the American war, when Great Britain had so many different nations against her. Are these, or are they not good grounds for inquiry? For what purpose do gentlemen think they were sent to this house? Do they believe they were sent here for the sole purpose of voting taxes, as was too often the case with the parliaments of the ancient kings of this country? or as a national council to see that the executive government is not only incorrupt, but judicious? It might have been supposed that after the memorable first of June we should be masters of the sea; but we have no reason to boast of the manner in which we have improved that victory. Our fleet came into port in November, and the French fleet put to sea, no doubt because ours was returned. So little fore-

sight or exertion was displayed in preparing our fleet for sea again, that it could not go out till late in January; and thus for two months the French were masters of the sea, and your fleets of merchantmen, and even troops embarked for important foreign services, were blocked up in your ports. I shall, perhaps, be told; "That our fleet cannot be always out." I say, that under proper management, a great part of it always might be out. But were two months necessary? Will any man contend that it might not have been ready in less than two months, during great part of which time it was known that the French fleet was out? There was even a rumour that after the ships were ready for sea, they were detained for want of biscuit and other provisions, which it became necessary to send by land carriage. How true these reports may be I know not; but they have been generally calculated and generally believed, which is a sufficient reason why you should inquire, that their truth or falsehood may be ascertained. Every one of the circumstances I have mentioned calls aloud for inquiry, unless the members of this house be prepared to say that our present circumstances, the present situation of the country, are so happy and so prosperous as to be *prima facie* evidence of the diligence and ability of his majesty's ministers; that they have steered us so steadily, and piloted us so wisely, that we ought to repose implicit confidence in them without inquiry, and deliver over to them all the functions of the house of commons. Can ministers themselves state any one ground why this house ought to repose in them any confidence whatever, much less such extraordinary confidence as this? Will they say that their administration of the war has been successful, or that the state of the country is prosperous? I am not, I hope, a man to give to success more credit than is due to it. I hope I can reverence unsuccessful wisdom. My own life has not been such as to lead me to think that success should be considered as the criterion of wisdom. Let the minister say that the calamities which have befallen the country have

been the immediate acts of God. That they have been thunder storms and tempests where human prudence could avail us nothing. But let not him say that Great Britain is declining in every quarter. That she has been reduced in her resources, from a state of unexampled prosperity. That all her exertions, and the most lavish profusion of treasure and of blood, have availed her nothing. And yet deny to this house the propriety of an inquiry, to discover, if possible, the source of such a train of misfortunes. In such a case, it is the duty of every member of this house, of the friends of ministers themselves, to give up their private confidence and to promote inquiry. If they find that ministers have been pursuing an impracticable object, or endeavouring to obtain it by inadequate means, they will then know how to apply the remedy. They may, if they please, even after finding that ministers have been wrong, grant them a new lease of their confidence; but they will first point out to them their errour, and give them wholesome advice for their future conduct. If, on the other hand, they find that ministers have been pursuing wise ends by wise means; that although their success has not hitherto corresponded with their prudence, they have neither been deficient in industry nor skill; they may say with satisfaction to themselves and their constituents: "We will continue our confidence in these ministers, they have deserved success if they have not obtained it, and perseverance will overcome the malignity of fortune. But until we go fairly into this inquiry, we cannot dissemble that mankind will and must continue to suspect that the conduct of ministers has not been such as it ought to have been; and that it has been erroneous in some way or other.

Sir, exhausted as I feel myself, and long as I have already trespassed on the patience of the house, I must pass over in silence many points which are nearly connected with the general statement, and which would call powerfully on this house to enter into an inquiry on the state of the nation. But although I

conceive I have already stated sufficient ground for going into such an inquiry, on all the questions more immediately connected with the war; there is yet one subject so closely connected with the prosecution of it in one point of view, that before I sit down I must beg leave to make a few observations upon it—I mean the present situation of the sister kingdom. The house will do me the honour to recollect that, very much against the inclination of the majority of this house, of the publick, of my own constituents, and even of my most intimate friends, I formerly harassed, and, if you please, teased this house, with a variety of considerations, and with different questions which you were unwilling to hear. I persevered obstinately, however, not because I had any personal satisfaction in doing so when the house was not disposed to listen to me, but because I thought that at the outset of the war, it was my bounden duty to lay before this house those circumstances which, as appeared to me, ought to have discouraged us from entering upon it. I felt no pleasure in addressing those arguments to unwilling ears, for I am not desirous of imitating the example of Cardanus, an author whose works, sir, may possibly not be very familiar to you, although you are a learned man, as they are now but little read. This author says, "Nunquam libentius loquor quam cum quod loquor auditoribus displicet." I spoke from no such motive, neither did I, like Cardanus, persevere the more obstinately as I perceived I was heard more unwillingly. Sir, I persevered because I thought it my duty to persevere; and, among other things I stated, as discouragements for going on with the war, that the Austrian Netherlands could not be retained, while the subjects of his imperial majesty were disaffected to, and even hated, his government; that Holland could not be defended, because the Dutch had been forced into the war against their inclination, and did not wish to defend it; and that the king of Prussia had clearly proved, by his conduct in the first campaign, that Great Britain and her allies ought not to depend upon him. I was then told

that my speech was a gross libel upon the characters and conduct of all our actual and all our possible allies. —But, sir, if it was a libel, experience has shown that it was true, which according to the common doctrine of lawyers, does not make it less a libel; and I hope that, as far as concerns its truth, it will go down to posterity a convicted libel. I then also touched upon some dangers which I apprehended with respect to Ireland. I was told: "Touch not upon Ireland, that is a subject too delicate for discussion in this house. This house," it was said "has nothing to do with Ireland. Ireland has a parliament of her own, and will take care of herself." To that I then answered, as I shall do now; that when a British house of commons, as the great council of the nation, is advising the king upon a matter of so much importance as peace or war, they ought to extend their consideration to all the most material parts of the empire of Great Britain; and surely it is unnecessary to state that Ireland is a most important part of his majesty's dominions, as furnishing great resources of men for the army and the navy in time of war. Without the assistance of Ireland, we can never be secure in peace, and without her assistance we cannot be successful in war. The identity of her constitution, and her being under the same executive government, make Ireland a constant object of attention, from which we may derive information with regard to the king's ministers, to which we may look for examples to be imitated, or errours to be avoided. Ireland has always been considered as an object of observation to which it is our duty to look. I saw formerly certain prejudices in that country which would throw much difficulty in the way of the Roman catholicks getting all they asked, and all that justice required they should have, as subjects of the same constitution, viz. equality of rights with every other subject. There had sprung up in that country a strange jargon of what is called a protestant ascendency, as if such a thing as a religious ascendency ought to take place in politicks. Ministers, some time ago, got over the difficulty in part, and, although not in a way calculated to gain much respect,

conciliated the affections of the catholicks for the time. This, however, was not the only subject of complaint. There were other abuses in Ireland, of which the people did bitterly complain; and when the coalition took place, in July last, however much I might lament that event, I certainly did think it might produce this good effect—that the corrupt administration of Ireland would be radically reformed, and that possibly as much might be gained to liberty there as seemed to be lost to it here. That was in fact near being the case, when all of a sudden things unfortunately took a different turn.

Without entering into the question—Who is to blame? I ask the king's ministers, and defy them to give me any answer but one, whether Ireland is not at present in a state of irritation? whether she is not in a state of danger? And if she is in such a situation as to give just cause of alarm to every friend of the country, whether this state has not been occasioned solely by his majesty's ministers? Some people may say: "It is owing to the ministers here:"—others—"to the ministers there." But I defy any man to say that the present state of that country—whether it be owing to the duke of Portland I know not—whether it be owing to the right honourable gentleman opposite to me, or to earl Fitzwilliam, I know not. But of this I am certain, that it is entirely owing to the improper conduct of the king's ministers. Let ministers themselves explain, and point out to the publick those individuals on whom they say blame ought to attach; but let them deny this fact if they can: that the present irritated state of Ireland has arisen solely from the conduct of ministers there or in this country; although I have little doubt in my own mind to which of them it is owing. Earl Fitzwilliam is sent over as lord lieutenant to Ireland, justly popular from his personal character, and more so from his connexion with a part of the ministry here, supposed to be favourable to the claims of Ireland. He arrives, he consults with men to whom the people of Ireland had been long accustomed to look up with confidence; he is adored, he is idolized

to such a degree, that the people of Ireland join with him in the absurd cry of war! Nothing but earl Fitzwilliam's popularity, nothing but his personal character, and his connexion with that part of the ministry here, who were supposed to be friendly to the claims of the people of Ireland, could have induced them to join in that cry. What happens? Earl Fitzwilliam states from the throne the general wishes of his majesty for carrying on the war; that it is intended to give emancipation to the Roman catholicks of Ireland. And although it is not usual for his majesty's speech to state specifically the topicks to which it recommends the attention of parliament; yet this the lord lieutenant states in very distinct terms. [It was intimated from the ministerial side of the house that this was not so.] It was so understood, continued Mr. Fox, or, if you please, it was so misunderstood in the Irish parliament. They are told that abuses are to be reformed; they see the most respected men in the country daily raising up in the house of commons to propose the reform of abuses; they see those measures attended with fewer dismissals from office undoubtedly than the people could have wished, but with the dismissal of several persons known to be connected with the old abuses. They consider all this as the omen of approaching liberty; and that all the people of Ireland, without distinction, are about to enjoy those rights and privileges to which they are in justice entitled, and which they ought always to have enjoyed. All this passes, day after day, in the face of the world, without the least opposition on the part of the cabinet of Great Britain. What follows? Great supplies are called for by his majesty; and the Irish parliament vote supplies exceeding, in an enormous degree, any ever voted in any former period. The Irish, in high expectation of the promised reform of abuses, with a degree of imprudence, not perhaps strictly justifiable on the sober and cautious principle that reform and supply should go hand in hand (but it is the character of the nation to be more generous than prudent)

granted the supplies before the promise was fulfilled. The moment these enormous supplies are granted, the cup is dashed from their lips; their eager and excited hopes are blasted; and they are told: "We have got your money; you may now seek for your reform where you can." The ministers here then quarrel with this popular lord lieutenant, this favourite friend of their own, whose personal character did more for the coalition than the characters of all the other ministers united. I say, that the personal character alone of lord Fitzwilliam did more for the coalition than the characters of the whole cabinet of Great Britain united could do; it made the coalition popular, because, from his accession it was supposed to be pure. They give up, however, this popular friend, whom but a few months before they had taken more pains to gain than all the rest who joined them either then or afterwards. Even earl Fitzwilliam they gave up rather than that Ireland should receive from this country the benefits to which she is in common justice entitled; and in the hopes of which she had voted for the service of his majesty such large and liberal supplies.

Sir, I may be told "that this lord lieutenant gave hopes and promises which he was not authorized to give." To that I answer, that from my knowledge of him, I do not believe it. But suppose it were so; what is that to us? what is that to this house? Is it not a matter of total indifference to us where the blame lies? Is not Ireland in danger? No man will deny it; and that is sufficient for my purpose. The blame attaches either on the ministers in Ireland, or on the ministers here; and if this house does not institute an inquiry, and explain clearly and satisfactorily to the publick who has been the cause of this alarming danger, we may be responsible for the dimemberment of the British empire. It may be supposed that this is one of those questions on which I have strong personal partialities. I admit it. I believe I shall never be able to devest myself of them; and I am perfectly convinced that Earl Fitzwilliam's conduct

in this particular instance has been agreeable to the uniform tenour of his whole life. I firmly believe that he has acted fairly and honourably, and agreeably to what was understood between him and his colleagues in the British cabinet. This conviction is matter of great private satisfaction to me, but it is nothing to the publick, or to this house. That great and imminent danger has been incurred is undeniable; and this house cannot refuse to inquire into the cause of the danger, with a view to discover the means of averting it, without betraying one of its most important trusts. I call not for this inquiry to clear the character of this or that minister, in order to attach blame to another. The great duty of this house is to show to the people of England, by whose fault this danger has been created.

The Roman Catholicks of Ireland make about three fourths of the people, and I am happy to see that the Roman Catholicks and Protestants now only make one party. I do not, therefore, dread any rupture between the Roman Catholicks and the Protestants. The parties now to be dreaded in Ireland are, on the one hand, a few people holding places of great emolument, and supporting corruption and abuses; and on the other, the Irish nation. The Protestants are as much interested in this great business of reform as the Roman Catholicks. They have but one great common interest, to preserve that country against a corrupt and oppressive administration. I no longer dread any danger to Ireland from disputes between the Roman Catholicks and the Protestants. But I dread that the Irish nation, in consequence of the support of abuses and corruption, may become less connected with, and less attached to, the English nation. I dread the alienation of the Irish people from the English government. Many gentlemen in this country, who have not taken all the pains they might to examine into the subject, may imagine that the government of Ireland, because consisting of king, lords, and commons, nearly resembles that of Great Britain. That however is by no means the case. These three branches

of the Irish constitution, although the same in name with the three branches of the British constitution, differ materially in their composition; and the government of Ireland varies in many other respects from the government of this country. I dare say also, that some gentlemen know so little of what has passed in Ireland since the year 1793, as to imagine that the Roman Catholicks are now nearly on the same footing with the Protestants; and that, since the above period, they have suffered no persecutions or exclusions. If there is any man who thinks so, he grossly deceives himself. But passing over these circumstances, is it not self-evident, that the danger arising from the present state of Ireland, has been created by some of the king's ministers? Let the house go into an inquiry, and they will clearly see on whom punishment ought to fall. If the ministers in Ireland are guilty, let them be punished: or, if his majesty's ministers here, which is much more probable, have been the cause of this irritation, let punishment fall upon them. If Earl Fitzwilliam, rashly and wantonly running after popularity, has sacrificed the real interests of that country, he deserves the severest censure, and the most rigorous proceedings of this house against him. But I am confident that this is not the fact. If upon an inquiry, by this house, it shall appear, that he has been trifled with, and shuffled out of his measures and situation by ministers here, in order to serve their own base purposes; if it shall appear that he has acted on the principles of prudence and patriotism, and that his government was founded on principles which tended to preserve the connexion between the two countries, what censure, what punishment, can be too severe for those who have been the authors of such shuffling and of such duplicity? That the whole blame in this business is to be imputed to his majesty's ministers, is a matter about which no man living can dispute. It may be said, perhaps, that some of the king's ministers are more and others less blameable. If that is so, let us go into a committee, and we shall be able to ascertain with accuracy the differ-

ent degrees of guilt that belong to different individuals. On that ground it is impossible to refuse an inquiry.

I have now nearly gone through the different points to which at the outset I called the attention of the house, though I have purposely omitted many circumstances connected with the subject. I know it to be a common argument against such motions as this to say: "Your final object is the removal of ministers; why then do you not move at once to remove the king's ministers?" My answer is: Because I think we ought first to have an inquiry. At the same time I candidly admit my opinion to be, that if an inquiry be gone into, the result must be the removal of his majesty's present ministers. On what rational ground should this induce any member of the house of commons to oppose inquiry? Does any man who approves of continuing the war, hope for better success than we have hitherto experienced, while it is conducted with the same weakness and folly? Does any man who wishes for an end to the war, hope that his majesty's present ministers can obtain for this country a safe and honourable peace? If, after an inquiry into their past conduct, it shall turn out that they have acted justly and wisely, then let us continue our confidence in them. But if the contrary should appear, as I strongly suspect it will, then it will become the duty of this house to call them to an account, parhaps to punishment. This inquiry, among other advantages attending it, will discover to the nation the true causes of all our late failures and calamities.

In every undertaking, there are two points to be considered—the object and the means. Wise men choose a wise object, and persist in their efforts to obtain it by varying the means, the object still the same. The conduct of the present administration has been quite the reverse with regard to the war. Day after day, and motion after motion has varied the object, but they uniformly insist on the same means. Blood, war, and treasure are their means, however they may vary their object. They have invariably persisted in these means, and in the means

(if I may so express myself) of putting these means in execution, they have equally persisted. They have constantly avoided making a choice between the two branches of the alternative I have stated. They have roused all France against them. They have gained no party whatever in that country, because they have clearly shown that they deserve the confidence of no party.

The present state of the affairs of Ireland shows, that there is no part of the British empire in which the strongest traces of the minister's misconduct are not to be found. There are some occasions, one would imagine, upon which ministers must wish to be clearly understood. But men never get the better of their nature; and whenever the right honourable gentleman opposite to me expresses himself, he is differently understood by every man who hears him; even upon those occasions when he pretends to be most explicit, he is differently understood by different members of this house, by his own particular friends in it. And when he is called upon to explain himself, he is equally unfortunate; his expressions are still ambiguous and doubtful. What has lately happened in Ireland is a further proof of this: for it now turns out, that upon the most important subjects he is not understood, or rather he is misunderstood by his own colleagues in the cabinet. Has not the right honourable gentleman the faculty of speech? It is not surely for want of words, or choice of expression, that the right honourable gentleman was thus unintelligible. But, although possessed of as great powers of eloquence as ever belonged to man, he employs that gift, not for the purpose for which it was conferred, of being clearly and distinctly understood, but for the purpose of being *misunderstood*. When in a private room with some of his new colleagues, it is impossible for the right honourable gentleman so to express himself as that they can be certain they understand him. What was said of a great man of ancient times, is extremely applicable to the right honourable gentleman—*In rebus politicis*,

nihil simplex, *nihil apertum*, *nihil honestum*. If we go into this inquiry, we shall prove to our constituents that we are really affected by the state of the country, and that we are not idle nor forgetful of our duty. It is of much importance in this moment of danger, that we should be perfectly acquainted with our true situation. Let us put it out of the power of any man to say, that Great Britain is persisting in a disastrous war, without knowing who are her allies; without inquiring what are the causes of her failures and calamities; and that every thing is gone except the name of her ancient constitution.

But whether a committee of inquiry is granted or not, I shall at least derive this satisfaction from having moved for it, that I shall show to the people of England that there are still some men in the great council of the nation, who anxiously wish to have an opportunity of proving to them what is their real situation, and of doing every thing in their power to avert, if possible, the further calamities of war, and effusion of human blood.

If a committee of inquiry is gone into, I shall have occasion to move for a number of papers, to which I have alluded in the course of my speech, particularly the correspondence respecting Ireland, and which will afford that information which I conceive to be of so much importance. At present I shall conclude with moving: "That this house do resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to consider of the state of the nation."

MR. FOX'S SPEECH,

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL FOR THE NEW ASSESSED TAXES.

NO period of the "mighty contest," which she so gloriously waged against revolutionary France, was more sinister in its events, or held forth more gloomy prospects to Britain than the year 1797.

Defeated by the frantick and desperate energy of the enemy; by the treachery of some of her allies, by the supineness of others, and by the feeble, wavering, irresolute conduct of the whole in her well devised schemes to curb the ambition, and to check the rapid strides of French aggrandizement on the continent, she found at the same moment within her own dominions a widely diffused spirit of disaffection, which seemed, at least in one and the most vulnerable portion of them, fast ripening into revolt, and the distractions of civil discord.

As, moreover, not a single object for which the war was undertaken had hitherto been attained, save the prevention of the pernicious doctrines of the "Republican Decalogue" acquiring ascendency in the country, an advantage scarcely to be comprehended, much less duly appreciated by any vulgar capacity, and, as also every hope of French humiliation, once so sanguinely indulged was vanished, the nation, even a considerate and loyal part of it, in the humour of despondency and mortification, were

withdrawing their confidence from the ministry, and now called as loudly for peace, as they had before vehemently insisted on the commencement and prosecution of hostilities.

But, happily, at this awful juncture, there was at the head of the British councils a statesman! who, eminently endowed with the "courage of the cabinet," saw these thickened difficulties without dejection or dismay. Not discouraged by the derelict state in which his country was left by the recreant desertion of her former associates in the struggle; nor by the gigantick power of France; nor by the complaints, and clamours, and treasonable combinations at home, he coolly determined to urge the war with renovated exertion, and redoubled vigour.

Preparatory, however, to the introduction of his new measures he deemed it expedient distinctly to show to parliament, and the people, the utter impracticability of concluding a peace consistently with the honour, the rights, or even security of the empire. For this purpose, a negotiation with the "Regicide Republick" was opened at Lisle, in a temper sufficiently moderate and conciliatory. But the enemy meeting these pacifick dispositions by claims in their nature as lofty, as they were arrogantly preferred, the negotiation was broken off. The result of this experiment restored, in a great degree, the popularity of the administration, though a considerable party still remained, both in and out of parliament opposed to it.

On the 22d of November the minister, in bringing forward his annual statement of accounts, declared it to be his intention to have recourse to a perfectly new and solid system of finance, which should be adequate to the publick exigencies, and to the support of the country in the arduous situation in which she was placed.

The principal feature of the new system, was a proposition "*to raise within the year seven millions by additional imposts, which should be regulated by the existing assessed taxes in a triplicate proportion*

to their actual amount, but limited *to a tenth of each person's* income." This impost is what has been commonly denominated the income tax.

In every stage of the bill, which Mr. Pitt accordingly presented to the house, there was an animated and sometimes a violent discussion of its principles. The prominent members of the opposition, who had previously ceased their attendance in parliament, resumed, on this occasion, their duties. Fox and Sheridan were particularly strenuous in their efforts to thwart the bill. But their attempts were successfully repelled by different members of the administration, and after a very lengthened contention the bill was finally carried.

We cull from the mass of eloquence delivered in this debate several speeches. The leading one will be found to be Mr. Fox's. It has the usual merits of his parliamentary productions.

How his inveterate repugnance to this bill, and the declaration contained in the conclusion of his speech, that "*he would never have a seat, high or low, in any administration, until publick opinion should have decided for a thorough, and perfect reform of all abuses, and for a direct return to the general principles of the British constitution,*" can be reconciled with his subsequent conduct, we leave those to determine who have celebrated the purity of his integrity and the consistency of his political principles.

At present it must be confessed, that he stands convicted of the glaring contradiction of seizing the first opportunity of coming into power with all the alleged corruptions and abuses staring him in the face; and that, among the earliest financial acts of his administration was the revival of the Income Tax, in a shape equally odious and far more oppressive to the *People*. So much for the *professions of demogogues*, and the *honesty of exclusive patriots!*

SPEECH, &c.

MR. SPEAKER,

I DO not conceive that the attendance or non-attendance of any particular member of this house can be a fit subject of observation. I agree in that respect with the right honourable gentleman who spoke last, that the propriety of attending this house or absenting, is a matter that ought to rest with each individual. I have nothing to say upon that subject, further than that the same motives which induced me to absent myself for some time, are now as prevalent in my mind as ever. My opinion is now what it has long been, that the present administration of this country have, by the unfortunate blindness of this house, by the too easy temper of the people of this country, so impaired and deranged its finances, so increased its embarrassments, but above all, so disfigured its constitution, that no services which any individual can render by his attendance, will be sufficient to balance the mischiefs which must arise from giving countenance to an opinion, that the decisions of this house are always the just result of full discussion. In that opinion I am as firm as at any time of my life. It is not the establishment of this or of that regulation in a particular instance, of this or that modification of a particular measure, that can essentially serve the people of this country. Nothing short of a total reform of your late system, nothing short of your reverting to the true principles of our constitution, to the popular maxims of our ancestors, can save us from utter ruin. Seeing that by my attendance I was unable to prevail on this house to adopt these principles, I omitted to attend it. But I attend to night in consequence of what is to me at least an important sentiment—the propriety of yielding to the request of my constituents. This is not a moment to enlarge upon the duties of a member of this house; but it appears to me, that to comply with the general desire of his constituents, especially in such a case as that which is

now before you, is one of those duties. I have been told to night that I have been much imposed upon in the representations of many important publick events; that I have formed erroneous conclusions from them; that I, in my retirement, have had leisure to reconsider my former opinions; and that I, like others, may have had much to learn. Those who think they have arrived to that degree of knowledge, beyond which they have nothing to learn, are in a state which, when they effect it, show they have learnt but little. But I should hold myself much indebted to the honourable gentleman who made this observation, if he would tell me in what book of ancient or modern history—in what school of admired philosophy—in what system of any admired politician since the creation of this world to the present hour, I am to find, that perseverance in a system which has led you to the brink of ruin, is the way to extricate you from your difficulty. That indeed is one of the lessons which I have yet to learn. I had no hopes of gaining for the publick any advantage by my attendance; but my constituents desired me to attend, and I determined to comply. I know it is popular, in this house at least, to hold that a member of parliament is not particularly bound to obey his own constituents, whose opinions may be guided by local prejudices and partial interests; that he is to consider himself as the representative of the people at large; and that he is to act as appears to him most favourable to that enlarged view of the interests of his country. I trust that I should be no more ready than others to obey the wish of a particular class of men who happen to be my constituents, if by so doing I was convinced I obeyed them to the prejudice of the whole community, of which I am a member. But in this particular instance, as indeed most instances in which I have been concerned, I have the comfort to feel that my sentiments and those of my constituents perfectly coincide. The honourable gentleman says, that the moment we are here, each of us is the representative of every man in this country. There are others who may say, as they

have said, we may as well call ourselves the representatives of any other country as of this. That indeed we ought to be virtual representatives of the people; but that our measures have too clearly proved how capable we are of acting upon another principle.

My constituents have desired me to attend this bill, and if I thought my opinion more important than theirs I should have endeavoured to have reasoned with them upon the futility of that attendance: but their desire controls my conduct. I am bound to state their case in this house. They think, and so do I, that by this bill all the principles of our ancestors are abandoned, and a profligatec ontempt of property (the protection of which was one of their favourite objects) is now manifest from the tenour of the bill before you.

The right honourable gentleman who spoke last states two grounds upon which this subject may be considered. He admits, first, that every man who opposes all means of supply except such as arise from the funding system may fairly oppose the principle of this bill; certainly he may. Secondly, he states that those who think that taxes should not be laid upon income, but generally upon property, may also vote for the second reading of this bill, with a view of modifying it in such a manner as to answer the object which the principle of the bill is supposed to have in view; namely, a tax upon property, so as to raise a considerable part of the supplies within the year; that is to say, that any man who objects to the increase of assessed taxes may yet vote for the contribution of property for the service of the state. I confess that argument was perfectly new to me. Where am I to look for the principle of this bill? I should think to the resolutions on which it is founded. They certainly are very long and verbose; but I do not see one line in them that relates to the principle of the measure, which does not state the assessed taxes as their basis as well as their criterion. And yet I am told that any man who thinks that these

assessments are the worst of all possible criteria, may vote for this bill, because it is that which has for its object a general taxation upon property. This I consider as the mere shuffling language to which gentlemen are driven to support the infamous system on which they endeavour to load the people of this country. The right honourable gentleman says he knows of no discontent which has been expressed against the principle of this bill as a tax upon property; that all the objection arises from the assessed taxes being taken as a criterion whereby that property is to be guessed at. The objections which have hitherto been made by those best capable of judging, at least most sincere in examining, namely, those who are to be called upon to pay, have been made to the bill which is now before you, and it would be strange indeed if they did not object to a bill which tends to the immediate destruction of their trade, the annihilation of their fortunes, and possibly the loss of the liberty of their persons. I consider their objections as pointed against the fundamental principles of the bill. Another honourable gentleman seems to think that the unpopularity of the measure is no argument against it. He seems rather to think it an argument in its favour: for he says, he believes that the people would not cry out against it unless they thought it a measure effectual for the purpose of raising a large sum of money. That honourable gentleman seems to think the objections of the publick unreasonable in this particular. I understand he is connected with commerce himself, and I therefore appeal to him, whether he would not himself claim the privilege of complaining at least, if a demand were made upon him for money which he felt he could not pay; and which by the theory of our constitution, he was not bound to pay without his own consent. Such is the case of the inhabitants of the city of Westminster, and so have they instructed me to state it.

It is asked: What objection can be stated to the raising part of our supplies within the year? To that I must give shortly a very conditional answer. If

any man could show me (the possibility of which I doubt) any means of raising a large supply within the year, without a disadvantage which would overbalance it, I should be glad to comply. But here I must pause awhile, and consider the progress of the present war. We are now called upon by this measure not to burthen our posterity, but to stand the brunt in our own persons. This, under certain circumstances, might be very prudent; generous it certainly would be; but I think it comes with a very ill grace from those who have contributed so much already to the burthens to be transferred to such posterity. It comes from those who have pursued a plan which tends to burthen our posterity so much, that they are afraid of pursuing it any longer; and now most generously, whether they are absolutely under the necessity of stopping, they turn round and call upon us to bear an intolerable burthen in order to support their measures. This plan proceeds from absolute necessity, not from any tenderness felt for those who are to come after us; and I cannot help thinking that its publick spirit will be much respected in the world. If there was any period (and I am now begging the question merely for the sake of proceeding in the argument) but if there had been any period in which such a measure as this could have been well timed, it was at the commencement of the war. The chancellor of the exchequer proceeded upon something like it, as far as it can be considered as a plan to diminish future burthens immediately after the Spanish armament. Why not produce this plan at the commencement of the war? Why! because it was necessary to delude this house! because it was necessary to delude the people of this country! because it was necessary for the purposes which the minister had then in view to treat you all like children! This was the reason why this plan was not at first adopted. If it had, the delusion would have been over, and the people would have seen the abyss to which the minister was disposed to lead them. No! that would not suit his purpose. The people would have revolted

at a system so developed. So well aware was he of this, that in an early stage of this contest, he advised his majesty to tell his parliament it was a great consolation to him, that in the prosecution of this just and necessary war, there need not be imposed upon his people very heavy and oppressive burthens. Why did he not then come forward with the patriotick principle which he now assumes? Why! because he thought it necessary to delude you, to gain your assent to enter into the contest, by telling you the burthen would be light; and now that you are involved in all its difficulties, and when he tells you you cannot retire with honour, he comes with this impost, which would have been too abominable at the onset, but which he now means to pass in the present desperate situation of your affairs.

Although no great friend to novel systems of finance, I am ready to say, that any thing which is new ought to be adopted, provided it appears to be wise; but I am ready to confess also, that I have never heard of a better system for raising money in times of difficulty than that of the Funding System. It is not the business of this day to discuss that subject. It is more immediately the question before us, what is the nature of the present measure, supposing us to disregard the funding system altogether. I conceive this to be intended as a tax on the income of each individual, as well as it can be ascertained. It must therefore be the wish of the minister to learn the amount of the income of each individual in the nation; this he proposes to do by examining the present assessment. If it be not a tax on income, I should be glad to know what is. Indeed the right hon. gentleman who spoke last considers it not as a tax upon income, but a tax upon property; and calls upon all those who approve of that principle to support it, saying, that the opposition to it proceeds from a misapprehension of its nature. Taking it then in the general view, as a tax upon property, according to the expressions of the right hon. gentleman, I am led to examine its nature. I certainly do think that in that

view it is a tax of a very dangerous description. A tax upon property must either arise from land, from money in the funds, or from commercial gains. What would be the fair way of viewing either of these three species of property? I consider all those pursuits in life which in popular parlance are very justly denominated professions, under the head of commercial gains.

These being the different denominations of property, let us examine the principle of this bill as it applies to each. Would you tax the land proprietor by a direct impost? No, it is not attempted. Would you tax the property of the fund-holder? No. No minister has yet been either blind or abandoned enough to attempt it. The annuities on the funds have been secured from year to year, and parliament stands pledged not to touch that property with taxation. So stands the law. But this bill will tax indirectly that which no minister has yet dared to tax in a direct manner. It has been said that our funding system has contributed to preserve the effects of our revolution, to preserve the interests, and keep up the spirits of this country, to enable us to thwart the ambitious views of the house of Bourbon. See whether this plan does or does not tend to the diminution of the value of that security. I am sure it is understood by my constituents, not only likely to affect such security, but also all their commercial interests. Let us suppose, for instance, that two gentlemen of equal fortune setting out in life, the one of them with his ten thousand pounds, laying it out upon mortgage, and living upon the interest of his money, which would be 500l. per annum. You would tax him, according to the principle of this bill, for that income and no more. Suppose the second applies his 10,000l. in commerce, and it produces to him 1000l. per annum. You will tax him at the rate 1000l .a year.— What is the real reason of this difference? They are both equal in point of real property. But as you make income the basis of your taxation, you impose upon diligence, upon activity, and upon industry,

double the weight which you lay upon him who chooses to repose indolently and supinely upon the produce of his capital. It is thus you propose to preserve in men that spirit by which this country has been distinguished from other nations. Idleness is favoured, diligence discouraged!—a principle so detestable that I could not have conceived it possible to enter into the mind of any man acquainted with the springs of human action. You call this, in another view, a tax upon luxury. Is a house a luxury? In the case of a multitude of my constituents, it neither is, nor can be so considered. You say, that where a man contributes largely to the payment of assessed taxes, he gives evidence of wealth. What you consider as evidence of his wealth are nothing more than the implements of the trade by which he exists. There are many, especially among my constituents, whose constant custom it is to let lodgings. They are objects of the present bill. I know you may say, I dare say you will, that they shall be relieved by provisions, which are to be adopted in the committee. You pretend to something like a provision to those who let furnished houses. Let us suppose that a tradesman who pays a great rent for his house, such as would induce you, by the present plan, to consider him as a man of 1000l. a year income; his next door neighbour may be a private gentleman, whose real income is 2000l. a year, but who, by choice or accident, inhabits a house of much inferiour value; he will, by this tax, have a lighter impost than the tradesman. This is only one of the subjects of complaint against this bill. With respect to those who have ready furnished houses, I understand they will be liable to the full extent of this tax; and that, whether they be tradesmen or gentlemen, the one living upon an uncertain income, will make no difference; whereas it is most clear and manifest that the one lives upon a fortune, the amount of which he knows, and the other embarks the little capital he is able to collect in order to furnish a house, and to take the chance of subsisting upon the fruits of it. I should like to be

made acquainted with the justice and the equity of a bill which confounds the distinction between these cases. I am told indeed, that with regard to those who take furnished houses from their landlords, the occupiers are made answerable to government for this assessment, but that, under certain modifications, they are to call on their landlords to defray the expense of it, which, if the landlord refuses to pay, they are permitted to recover by means of an action at law. A very pleasant, a very certain, and a very concise remedy, especially as it may frequently happen that the landlord may not be forth coming to answer this exigency of the state, but who may very legally empower another person to receive his rent. I know that remedies may be inserted in the present bill, to protect those that let lodgings in houses furnished by themselves. I dare say they will be much of the same complexion with that relief which is offered to those who take furnished houses, and it will have much the same efficacy. But to try the merits of the bill by another test. If you think horses, or dogs, or male servants, fair tests of opulence, in God's name how can any housekeeper in Westminster or London, or the borough of Southwark, or any other considerable town, be fairly assessed? Is it possible to take any such criterion as the test of wealth in a populous place? It is quite impossible that it should enter into the mind of any man who governs his decisions by reason to think so; and I am much surprised that the chancellor of the exchequer should have taken advice so gross as that which leads him to blunder upon the principle of the present bill. He says: "Here are horses; they are to be considered as articles of luxury." They are so, generally speaking, to members of this house, to which, however, there are some exceptions. They are by no means to be considered as articles of luxury to merchants, or to traders, whose business is considerable or extensive, for many of them necessarily employ riders in the course of their commercial dealings. There are many others to whom horses are absolutely necessary.

Medical men, who are compelled to go from place to place in the course of their profession, have occasion for horses; as well as many others whose cases it is not necessary for me to mention. I say, therefore that this bill proceeds upon a principle which, in every view of it, is vicious as far as I have hitherto considered it. But this is not all. You are called upon to regulate your future exactions, not by the future prudence of men, which would be a fair rule of impost in certain cases, but by the most unjust, the most unreasonable, the most iniquitous rule that can be possibly adopted—that of the past expenditure of men. A man may have lived improvidently or imprudently, but who from experience finds it wise to contract his expenses. By this bill you allow him no chance of retrieving his fortune by that prudence which is the effect of his experience. You do not allow a man the benefit which ought to be the result of a long and prudent life. Let us suppose, for instance, that a man who, by his industry and frugality in life, or who is possessed of a competent fortune from his parents, residing in the country, should wish to come to London for a season with his family; from the short stay he intends to make, it may not possibly be a great object with him what his expenses are. He wishes to show his wife and daughters the gaiety of the town; he conducts them to places of publick amusement; and determines to retire into the country again, to enjoy his rural amusements. This he might have done at any time previous to this bill, without any other expense than such as he expected to attend his excursion to, stay in, and return from the metropolis. But if he take such an excursion in the year 1797, wo be to him, to his wife, to his children, and to all those who are most dear to him; for he is not only to pay for the expense of that excursion, but the expenses of that excursion are to be estimated according to the assessment which is made upon him in that day of his levity, and is to be called the test by which his ability to serve the state is to be estimated. This is said, I know it is, only to be

a temporary measure. It would be extravgant to consider it as an impost for life. Upon that, a word or two by and by. I say he is settled by this with a large, a heavy, an enormous, an unjust, an inequitable impost. This mode of calling upon men for future exertions in the service of the state is too iniquitous to bear the test of one moment's reflection. This principle of injustice reminds me of the illustration which Sterne gives of the violent extortion of the ancient government of France. The case is exactly in point. When at Lyons, Yorick resolved to change his mode of travelling, and sail down the Rhine instead of going post. The postmaster, however, applied to him for six livres, six sous, as the price of his next post. "But I do not intend to travel post," said Yorick. "You may if you please," replied the postmaster. "But I do not please," said Yorick—"I mean to go by water."—"That is no matter," said the postmaster, "you must pay for the next post, whether you have changed your mind or not." And, here the word *principle* or *spirit* was used as they are always used, to sanctify injustice: for, says the postmaster, "The spirit of the impost is, that the *grand monarque* shall not suffer by your *fickleness*." Charged he was, and obliged to pay.

So it is with the present tax: for all the people who have paid assessments in this country are called upon for great and additional assessments, which they must pay, or which must rather be wrested from them by distraining upon their goods, not upon a computation of their future ability, nor in prospect of their future views, but in consequence of their former expenditure, whether wisely or imprudently occasioned. By this plan it is in vain that a man's prudence is called in to regulate his circumstances. Let us consider this as applicable to persons in trade, as distinguished from those who possess permanent and specifick incomes. A man in trade may say, that the last year was a good one, and therefore he kept his one horse chaise, but whether he should continue it must depend upon circumstances; that he governed his expenditure pru-

dently by the fluctuation of his circumstances, and therefore, if his trade was worse this year than it was the last, he would set aside his one horse chaise and many other conveniencies. But by the principle of this bill you do not allow him to do so, and you add a mockery and insult to an injury, by telling him that you will call upon him to support the exigencies of the state according to his establishment as it appears by a former assessment, and you tell him that he shall pay hereafter triple what he formerly did, and this you intend as a compliment to his growing wealth as a tradesman. But it seems there is to be some relief in this bill to those who are overrated. They are to have abatements in proportion as they shall prove they are assessed beyond their income. But how is this abatement to take place? By the disclosure of all the private affairs of a man in trade—a mode of relief which, if it deserves the name, is as intolerable as the grievance. Take any tradesman, a watch-maker for instance, he would tell you that his income, prior to the last impost upon watches, was much superiour to what it is now. That must be the case with every other man in trade, especially as he does not know how he may be taxed hereafter. I am the more supported in this part of my argument, when I refer to the future prospect of the minister: for he tells us that a very considerable part of the ways and means are yet to come. How, therefore, is it possible for a tradesman, without knowing what the future subjects of taxation are to be, to guess at his future income? Under such considerations, the idea of calling upon a tradesman to guess at his future income is the most horribly unjust proceeding that ever could be devised by any minister of state. It is stated by a noble lord, that this tax will necessarily fall heavy upon the middling class, because, generally speaking, they consume articles which partake of the double quality of luxuries of life and necessaries. To which I must answer, that it is a grievance to any class of men, particularly so to those whose incomes are limited to a certain amount, not to have the benefit which general-

ly arises from a prudent diminution of expenses. It is allowing them no advantage from any economy they might be disposed to adopt; and it is exposing them, notwithstanding all disposition to economy, to utter ruin. It is not what the tradesmen will have to pay to the assessment in direct contribution, but what he will have to suffer in diminished trade: for by the attack on all the classes of gentlemen, you drive them to privations which are ruinous to trade. They may economize; they may drink less wine; they may indulge less in the comforts that are particularly dear or habitual to them; but this evil, great though it is, is little in comparison of the mischief it will do to trade. It will, however, introduce new manners and habits among us; and I will fairly say, that I am not for confounding the ranks of society. This is one of the evils, with which this measure is pregnant. No act of the directory ever did so much to confound the ranks of mankind as this measure will do. It will, out of the race of gentlemen, create two orders—princes and beggars. All the body of middle gentlemen will be reduced to beggary, for it is in vain to say that it is to be considered as a single or a solitary exertion.—It is announced for two years and a quarter, but who will say that it is to close there? Who will say that we have any near prospect of peace, or that this is likely to give us a peace? A tenth of the income is the nominal amount of the assessment; but in this the assessment is proportionate in name, not in substance; and there is no equality in its burthen on the people. The gentleman of 1000l. a year, for instance, who has to pay 100l. a year, is much more severely taxed than the man of 10,000l. a year who has to pay 1000l. A very little reflection will prove to gentlemen that the one case is infinitely more severe than the other. But whatever may be the hardships which it may bring on gentlemen, they are nothing, I repeat it, in comparison of its effects on the commercial part of the community. To gentlemen it may operate to retrenchment, and to the privation of indulgences; but to the trader it is ruin. The ostentation of the

best race of gentlemen may subside, and the young men may be taught more prudent habits; but this very retrenchment will be fatal to trade, and fatal also to the existing revenues. Commercial people have no refuge. They cannot retrench, for they do not now indulge. By every account, which I have been able to collect, by the report of every person whom I have seen, and by the whole tenour of the meetings of my constituents, I find that men of all descriptions, and whatever be their party feelings, unite in abhorrence of the principle and tendency of this bill. They all object to the principle, because the assessed taxes are not merely not a just criterion of wealth, but the worst and most fallacious that could be devised: for in every part of this metropolis, so fatal has been the disastrous war in which we are involved, that the assessed taxes are now with the greatest difficulty collected. They are either in arrear, or postponed, or the goods of the unhappy persons are regularly distrained; and they all unite in declaring, not merely against the inexpediency, but against the total impracticability of forcing the receipt; this is not the opinion of one district, or of one party, but it is the general opinion of every part of the people who have had time to examine the provisions of the bill; and really it will be a singular thing, if the house should oppose themselves to the universal voice of the kingdom. Gentlemen seem to forget that we affect at least to call ourselves the representatives of the people. I know that we are no such thing, but we affect to call ourselves so. Yet in this house only fifteen gentlemen could be found to vote against a measure upon which, out of that house, there was not merely a majority, but a unanimity of dissent. Ministers, in this instance, cannot plead their subterfuge, that it is the mere cry of a party. It is no such thing. Unanimous disapprobation has come from the most extraordinary places. Even the common council has been unanimous. There are but two sorts of representation—actual and virtual. You cannot pretend to call yourselves the actual representatives of the

people, but you say you are the virtual. Prove yourselves so, then, by obeying their united voice. I hope and trust that you will come round, and show yourselves, in some degree, entitled to the name of virtual representatives. I will fairly tell you, that even if you were to do so I should not consider it as a sufficient proof that you are even the true virtual representatives of the people, unless I see you also sympathize with the people. You must make common cause with them. You must invite them to sacrifices by your own example. You must lead the way. I remember an honourable member, now no more, who had the happy art of mixing argument with pleasantry in a way that was never excelled. Mr. Burke illustrated this principle by a story very much in point. A French regiment, in speaking of an old colonel whom they had lost, and of a new one that had succeeded him, extolled the first to the skies —"What particular reason have you for your ardent affection for the old colonel, rather than the new?" said a person to them. "We have no other reason" said they, "than this—the old colonel always said, *Allons, mes enfans!* The new colonel says, *Allez, mes enfans!*" This was indeed a striking contrast; and just in this manner I aver we ought to act towards the people. We ought not to say to them, "*Go*, make sacrifices!" but, "*Let us* make sacrifices." To rouse the energy of the people, let us hear of the sacrifice of the crown. It is from the highest place that the example ought to be given. It will animate and cheer the heart of the kingdom.

"Solamen miseris socios habuisse laborum."

When men are called on to give up their pleasures, whatever they may be, whether of horses or gardens, it is but reasonable that they should see the crown participating in the sacrifice. But when, instead of this, we see only that new patronage is to be obtained out of the levying of fourteen millions in this way, we must feel that these are bad symptoms, and that there is no common cause in the exertions we are

called upon to make; and we are made to believe that there is something in this war which makes it unfit for all such examples to be given. An honourable gentleman* says, that expenditure will not be diminished on account of this tax; it will only change hands, great sums will be wanted, he says, to clothe and to maintain the army. I wish the house to mark the expression. I certainly believe him. Great sums will go to the army. But is that any consolation to me? If 200l. is be taken out of my pocket, what care I to whom it is to be paid? But this very argument is, and ought to be, an object of just and serious alarm to the nation: for while these enormous sums are to be paid into the hands of government, it becomes almost the sole consumer. Let us examine the fact. One tenth of the expenditure of the whole kingdom is estimated at 7,000,000. That makes the total expenditure 70 millions; but, perhaps, as this is not the just test, and that there may be evasion, the total expenditure may be 100,000,000l. a year during this war. If, then, it be true that the expenses of the war are so essential to revenue, what a prospect for us when this source of revenue shall be cut off! The honourable gentleman, in speaking of a pledge, is extremely desirous of overlooking and explaining away his own. He is not willing to remember the emphatical pledge that he gave, never to make peace with the Jacobin government of France. What can we expect from men who have, through the whole of the war, shrunk from every pledge they have ever given? It is only by their removal that the nation can be saved from its present perilous situation. They are either fools or hypocrites who attempt to separate ministers from their measures, or affect to think that our affairs can be retrieved in their hands. The country must take its fate, if they are so dull of intellect, or so infatuated as to conceive that they can be rescued from their present situation by the imbecility that brought them into it. We are called upon to

* Mr. Dundas.

make this dreadful sacrifice in order to terrify France? We are to give up 7,000,000l. in one year, in addition to all our other burthens, to show to France that we have what their poets call *l'embarras des richesses*. Terrify France! What, by showing that we are forced to abandon the funding system, which had supported us through so many difficulties, because we dare no longer persist in it? Terrify France —by an exaction which will not be paid, which will convulse the country from one end to the other, or which, if it were possible to harbour the frantick idea of its possibility, would certainly paralize all our future operations, and lay us helpless at their feet! but it is not too much to call for unanimity in the further prosecution of this war? Those whose incapacity has been proved by a series of the most unvaried disasters, call for unanimity!

Can their late acts, their persecutions, their violences in England and Scotland, and still more so in Ireland, delude the people of France into an idea that they have the hearts of the country with them? Take the converse of the proposition. Would not the ministers of the crown deride a declaration from the directory, in which, if a La Vendée was still raging in France now, they still talked of possessing the unanimous sentiments of the people. The treatment of Ireland was such as to harrow up the soul. It was shocking to the heart, to think that a nation of brothers was thus to be trampled on like the most remote colony of conquered strangers; and it was monstrous to hear the minister talk of wielding Ireland as a weapon of force; Ireland which he was now holding himself under a military hand! The honourable gentleman takes it amiss that my honourable friend should say, that the whole contest is about nine or ten worthless men who are our ministers; and yet, can any man question the truth of the assertion who has observed their manners? During the whole course of our misfortunes they have not failed in their sole undivided object: in amassing for themselves and followers, places, pensions, peerages, and honours.

But what is the true and only ground of unanimity? In the support of a minister, confidence in the rectitude of his system, and in his capacity for carrying it into effect. Can they expect this unanimity? Review their grounds of the war, the Scheldt, Flanders, the decree of the 19th November, &c. have they not given up every one of these motives, as well as all that followed them; and their talents were now employed in explaining away the declarations they had made.—They could not, however, so easily explain away the quotation that they made from Virgil. It stood on record:

—— potuit quæ plurima Virtus
Esse fuit, toto certatum est Corpore regni.

They first held out to us the tempting occasion of attacking France, united with all Europe. Year after year their object changed, as well as their temptation —the brink of bankruptcy—ruined finances—distracted country—reign of terrour insupportable—reign of terrour at an end, and consequently the vigour it created—all in their turn were the baits they held out, and all as they failed made way for new delusions. Every thing was to be effected by our allies; and accordingly four millions one year, two millions another, and two millions sent by stealth in the third, were declared to be the cheapest way of carrying on the war. Now we are cut off from this cheap mode of defence. I was alarmed for the consequence; since being cut off from this cheapest mode, I feared we must be forced to take more extravagant means; but here I was happily disappointed: for this relief from the emperour has been accompanied by lowering our army and navy at home. Where he has failed, therefore, he has gained. Again, he said that there was no way of supporting the bank but by sending money to the emperour; he did send it—and the bank stopt! He is now prevented from sending any more money to the emperour; and I understand that the paper of the bank is in better credit then it was! In the same manner every declaration that he has ever made has failed him; but none so lamentably as in

his finance.—He has uniformly in each December stated the expense of the year millions under what it has turned out to be; and yet he calls for unanimity! He can expect no unanimity; and in truth there is no remedy for our evils, but peace. And this is not all. We must have peace and repose, not merely by the change of ministers and their condign punishment, but by a thorough change and reform in the system which has brought us to this ruin, by a return to the principles of liberty, not of power. Without this there could be no preservation for this country. I feel it as my most solemn duty to speak out. Unless Ireland is instantly conciliated, and brought back to the enjoyment of its genuine rights and communion in the constitution; unless Scotland is also reconciled; unless all the three kingdoms are restored to the blessings of that peace and perfect freedom of which they have been deprived, there can be no chance for the country to rise out of her present misfortunes; nor until you accomplish this can you hope ever for peace, because until you obtain this you cannot speak to France with the power of union; nor can you delude the directory with the boast of strength while they see you alienating by persecution every part of the empire.

In the argument which I have taken the liberty to trouble you with, I have not wandered from the particular measure of the day, because it is inseparable from the causes that have given rise to it. This is no common tax; and it is our duty, on a question of such dreadful import, to follow the wise practice of our ancestors—to consult our constituents. Do not let us delude ourselves by the idea that there is no danger. It is imminent. No human being can calculate the horrours to which the measure may give rise. I deprecate rashness. I know that men are fond of talking of the theoretical blessings of our constitution. I say that unless you make the people feel the practical blessings, you do nothing. Talk of the jacobin principles of the French Directory! No man has made so many jacobins as the right honourable gentleman;

and if this measure is to be persevered in, there is no saying to what we shall be driven. The tax may be put under the management of the military. It cannot be collected. What comes next? They may distrain; and when they have seized on our beds and chairs, they may take our persons—*Conire opes, primum, et post in corpora seviri.* Is such a measure to be hurried through the house? I am guilty of no exaggeration. I am sure that if time be given, you will have from all the great towns, from Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and elsewhere, remonstrances as strong as those you have seen from the city of London, from my constituents, and from the borough of Southwark. I shudder at the consequences if you persist. They may be dreadful. It is only by a quick return to the genuine principles of our ancestors that we can be safe. If we do not, I can only say, that "the days of these kingdoms are numbered, and that their ruin is not distant." The honourable gentleman* has said, that "if there were men who could give peace to the country, without throwing things into confusion, the present ministers would be the basest of mankind if they did not yield and make way for them." If there are men who feel themselves capable of restoring peace to those kingdoms, without a change of system, or restoring the constitution to its vigour, I can only say they are more sanguine than I am. I can speak without any personal motive on the subject, for I publickly declare, that *I never will have a seat, high or low, in any administration, until publick opinion shall have decided for a thorough and perfect reform of all our abuses, and for a direct return to the genuine principles of the British constitution.* If there are men bold and sanguine enough to think that they can not only procure peace but tranquilize the country without this, let him try it; but I will make no part in any such administration.

* Mr. Dundas.

THE SPEECH OF RICHARD B. SHERIDAN,

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL FOR THE NEW ASSESSED TAXES.

MR. FOX was followed in this debate by Mr. Percival, the present chancellor of the exchequer, who, it is said, particularly signalized his talents. We have been able to procure only a very brief and arid sketch of his speech; too imperfect to be inserted, but sufficient to vindicate its claims to the applause it certainly received when pronounced. The task of replying to this masterly production was allotted to Mr. Sheridan. To his speech we cannot refuse a place though not elegantly reported. It is one of the few of his parliamentary effusions which have been even *tolerably preserved.* This speech pretends not to enter deeply into the subject of discussion, nor to display much argument or pertinent information. But it boasts of being richly tinged with that playfulness of fancy, felicity of allusion, vivacity of remark, and brilliancy of wit which the energy of Mr. Sheridan's genius produces with such impromptick readiness, and inexhaustible fertility that his eloquence, if not always instructive never fails to enliven and to fascinate.

SPEECH, &c.

MR. SPEAKER,

I AM induced principally to rise in consequence of the speech of the learned gentleman * who has just preceded me, which, it must be confessed, was an extraordinary exhibition of eloquence. But I have, sir, another reason to offer myself thus early to the notice of the house in the intimation given me by my kind friend, † that if the discussion proceeded to a late hour he might grow weary of the subject, and perhaps hint to me to sit down. There is, however, one circumstance, which may probably abate, in some degree, the impatience of my friend, and afford him a little consolation. He must have observed, that besides the great ability displayed in the speech of the learned gentleman, that it was in perfect union and harmony with the sentiments of those with whom he usually acts, and might, therefore, tend to shorten the speeches at least from that side of the house. In the effusions of his eloquence it could not escape notice, that he had preserved a steady determination to abstain from all topicks connected with the bill. I will not dispute, that in parliamentary practice all this extraneous matter was fair and proper to be introduced in aid of other arguments, or by way of illustration; but while he abstained from all observations on the merits of the subject in discussion, it was not unreasonable to expect that he might have also abstained, or to use a modern and fashionable phrase, have modified his attack upon my honourable friend. ‡ Another point of abstinence that showed the prudence and discretion of the learned gentleman was, that in the midst of his animadversions on my

* Mr. Percival, now chancellor of the exchequer.

† Mr. Martin. ‡ Mr. Fox.

honourable friend,* he carefully avoided any contrast with the merits of his rival. He did not attempt to say that the present minister was the fittest person to restore the credit of the country, or to procure a peace; on the contrary, the only merit he ascribed to him was that of barring up the avenue to the advancement of his opponent. Against the latter gentleman were brought three heads of accusation, represented to be pregnant with the most alarming dangers to the country. First, He was accused of considering persons *innocent* of the crime of treason after having been *acquitted* by the verdict of a jury. Secondly, That on another occasion, where the liberty of the subject was violated, he said that "Resistance would be no longer a question of justice, but of prudence." Thirdly, That he lately declared: "He should never take a part in any administration, without stipulating for a radical, total, and fundamental reform of parliament, and change in the present system of government. The addition of *total* and *fundamental* has furnished the learned gentleman with a pretty play of words to represent that my honourable friend had no intention ever to fulfil his promise; that the total change would go no further than its parts, the fundamental one would only skim the surface, and the radical be no more than playing about the branches. These additional words were necessary to introduce and complete the epigram which the learned gentleman had, no doubt, previously composed. My honourable friend, sir, did really say, that he would decline any share in an administration without a *radical* change in the representation of the people, and in the present system and order of government. But he did not use the words *total* and *fundamental*. I am certain, however, sir, that as the learned gentleman has been so industrious in collecting the other parts of the sentence, my honourable friend will not have the least objection to throw the other two epithets into the bargain. But these

* Mr. Fox.

were said to be terrifick words, of great and portentious import; that they conveyed some dreadful meaning, which would offer an encouragement to the invasion of the French, and the designs of the Jacobins in this country. The learned gentleman even went so far as to say, that my honourable friend was himself convinced of their destructive tendency, and, if he came into administration, would either retract them, or refuse to fulfil his promise. Upon what was this supposition founded? What ground has he for thinking that my honourable friend, when in power, would be capable of retracting any engagement he solemnly entered into with his countrymen? The answer, perhaps, is not difficult to find. There are instances enough of great and mighty statesmen, who abounded in the most lavish professions of purity, disinterestedness and patriotism, and were afterwards base enough to falsify them all. It is not, indeed, sir, so very surprising that the learned gentleman should suspect others of a laxity in principles and professions, when, in his friend, the minister of the present day, the type and image of apostacy, are both before him. A *radical reform* was the very expression made use of by the minister in former times, when he declared, that, without a reformation in parliament, he should never make any part of any administration, as it was that without which there could be no salvation for the country. This solemn pledge he gave to the people at a time of more discontent and internal danger than even the present, I mean, towards the close of the American war. And this solemn pledge he soon not only abandoned, but became the persecutor of those whom his perfidy deluded. I wish those gentlemen who deprecate the frightful consequences that would result at present from carrying such pledges into effect, to declare in an open and manly way, whether they consider my honourable friend and the other advocates of parliamentary reform, to be jacobins and traitors? For myself, I am, and shall ever be, a determined enemy to any species of reform that is

inconsistent with the true and genuine principles of the British constitution. I am equally hostile to, and would resist with all my power, any experiments that might lead to it. I shall ever remain an enemy to any such reforms, whoever may be their authors, or whatever appearances they may assume. But equally hostile I shall be to any minister whose gigantick and colossal ambition sets at nought all parliamentary and constitutional forms; who dared to alter appropriation acts, and send away money, wrung from the industry of the people, without the consent of parliament; who still possessed power and confidence instead of punishment or rebuke; who stifled and crushed the voice and complaints of the people by military coercion; who, at an enormous expense has erected barracks for the soldiers, as if there were contamination and poison in the breath or touch of the people; who oppressed them with laws of constructive treason and sedition, and condemned them to transportation for remembering those lessons that he himself had taught them; who abused the powers vested by the constitution in the crown, and disposed of peerages, not as the reward of service, of virtue, or of talents, but as the price of an abandoned support of his corruption and oppression; and who by these means so contrived, that if the indignant spirit of the nation, roused and exasperated by the severity of its sufferings, should accuse him before the house of peers, a majority of his creatures would sit on him as judges. To put an end to these sufferings, to rescue the country from its abyss of misery, to recall the constitution to its true basis, can be a dangerous reform only in the opinion of those who share in the abuses. It has been asserted, sir, that in the disposition of the French Directory, my honourable friend would be likely to prove to them a more agreeble negotiator than the present minister. I believe it would be difficult to find any set of men less capable than these ministers of restoring peace: they have twice attempted it; but in the first instance there was no one so confident as to think they were sincere

That they were so in the second attempt, I have heard some persons say they believe it to be at least possible; but, for my own part, I have a very different opinion. It was said also, that the Directory left us no alternative whatever. I, on the contrary, maintain there is no alternative but in a change of ministers, let who would be their successours. The present minister and his colleagues have gone too far; their declarations will not be forgotten, and they are known to be incapable of preserving the relations of peace and amity with the French Republick. Suppose even that some sort of treaty should be patched up, it could not be called a treaty of peace and friendship while the hostile part remained. The jealousies, the animosities, the deadly hatred, would be eternal. Is that peace desirable which has no substantial difference from a state of war? Is it possible that two governments preserving such implacable hatred, should reduce their establishments, or should not be constantly on the watch to take advantage of any opportunity to injure and ruin each other? Their forces must be kept upon their present footing, to be prepared for the purposes either of annoyance or defence; and the French would have every reason to suspect the interference of England to assist commotions for the restoration of monarchy, by means of the same corruption which has already been employed to an enormous extent. It is known, by the example of revolutions, that the adherents of monarchy are not easily extinguished; the example of our own history will show how the French had renewed the claims of the house of Stuart. Between such parties, therefore, it is impossible there should exist any cordial or lasting peace; and this is one amongst the many reasons that calls for a change, as well of men as of system. It was, sir, insinuated, that there is danger of cooperation between my honourable friend and the government of France; and this was attempted to be proved from the language of the Directory. It is hard, however, to be arraigned, and even condemned, on the testimony of an enemy; it is certainly

that sort of evidence to which ministers would for themselves object. My honourable friend, however, it is said, being inclined to a reform, might give to that reform, when in power, all the effects of revolution!! How could he accomplish this? The house of commons was the same which have rejected every plan of reform. But he would then have the same power as the minister has now, and by the disposal of honours, places, and emoluments, bring them to his purpose. Is this any thing less than confessing parliament to be influenced by corruption? But he may dissolve the parliament, and then employ all the influence of government in obtaining a majority to his mind! Is not this fairly acknowledging, that the members of the house of commons are the creatures of the crown? And is it not an irresistible argument in favour of a reform? Should gentlemen attempt to deny the venality of parliament, and the influence of the crown, it may still be urged that the people being left to their own choice, will be induced to elect the friends of parliamentary reform. This argument, however, proves too much, as it implies the sentiments of the people to be in favour of that measure. Such were the miserable objections of gentlemen, which, when fairly sifted and considered, will not bear an examination. In the debate of the preceding evening, an hon. gentleman, I beg his pardon, a noble lord* animadverted with great severity upon an hon. baronet† who declared that he would not consent to grant any supplies to the present minister. For my own part, I do not go the length of opposing the supplies, though I entertain strong doubts of my being right in that opinion. One reason I have for not objecting under any circumstance to granting the supplies is, that when the expenses of government are incurred, I know they must in some way or other be paid, and the example afforded by a person who some time ago united himself with the present administration, makes me

* Hawkesbury. † Sir Francis Burdet.

apprehensive of the dreadful plunges that might be taken by pride and disappointed ambition. These considerations have fixed my resolution, notwithstanding the fatal experience that ministers misapply the monies that are granted to them, and have egregiously failed in every one of their projects. The naval victories which will, sir, forever adorn the annals of our times, are no answer to those assertions. The gallant achievements of our navy go only to show us the wretched incapacity of ministers in conducting a war which such repeated triumphs could not render successful—a war in which our calamities keep pace with the gallantry of our arms.

A noble lord* thought it a great argument in favour of the war, that, had we not entered into it, France would still have retained her ships and colonies, and by the conquest of her West India islands we had preserved ours from the dangers of the disorganizing system which she had introduced into her dependencies. But the noble lord forgot to state what were our losses and our sacrifices. We might have stood by in dignified neutrality, and beheld all the attention of France occupied upon the continent, in resisting her opponents, and endeavouring to obtain those boundaries and frontiers which were the objects of her highest ambition, and which she has since acquired and exceeded in spite of all our efforts. Thus employed, and having no naval enemy, the power of her marine would have dwindled of itself, while England without expense, would have quietly possessed the commerce of the world. If the government of France, jealous of this, should have made any endeavours to augment its marine, it would have been in our power to remonstrate and prevent it. What are our acquisitions by the war with France? *We have got possession of some ships* STOLEN *from Toulon, and charnel houses in the West Indies, where* fifty thousand *British youths have already found their graves!* These too, have been obtained at the expense of two hundred and fifty mil-

* Hawkesbury.

lions of money. We have lost the credit and honour of the bank; we have lost all the advantage to be derived from our connexion with Ireland, and have purchased for our country the dreadful situation of an eternal war with France till one or the other is destroyed! Let the house balance these sacrifices against our acquisitions, and then let them count our gains. But the horrid calculation by no means ends here. All these acquisitions and conquests, so valuable and glorious as they were represented to be, our ministers were satisfied to restore to France without any compensation, and barely as the price of peace. The noble lord has dwelt upon the relative as well as positive value of our conquests in the West Indies; and this relative value he stated to consist in preserving our islands from the disorganizing seduction of the enemy. Surely if this were true, our prospect becomes still more discouraging and gloomy. The ministers have agreed to surrender back these islands; and what must be the consequence? The same disorganizing system will be again abroad; and consequently we resign to the enemy, not only the conquests we have made, but our own islands. For when the first go, the others must follow. The noble lord has also noticed the misconduct of our allies, who he said did every thing wrong. I am curious to know how or when he picked up this information. Such an account was, sir, hardly to be expected from him, who, two years since, voted for the remittance of two millions of money from this country to one of them*. Nothing could then exceed the praises of this magnanimous ally, whose fidelity was the theme of admiration, and in whose glory and triumph, from the minister down to the meanest man in England, we were represented as participators. Even the minister was to have his part of the glory, like Ulysses claiming his share in the triumphs of Achilles. Where, I may ask, were now those triumphs and that glory? They were no

* The Emperour.

where to be found. The truth is, that it was we ourselves who began this selfish system practised by our allies, by neglecting to concentre our force with that of the enemy, and by insatiably seizing upon colonies and other advantages.

A wise man, sir, it is said, should doubt of every thing. It was this maxim probably, that dictated the amiable diffidence of the learned gentleman,* who addressed himself to the chair in these remarkable words —"I rise, Mr. Speaker, *if I have risen.*" Now, to remove all doubts, I can assure the learned gentleman that he *actually did rise*; and not only rose, but pronounced an able, long, and elaborate discourse, a considerable portion of which was employed in an erudite dissertation on the histories of Rome and Carthage. He further informed the house, upon the authority of Scipio, that we could never conquer the enemy until we were first conquered ourselves. It was when Hannibal was at the gates of Rome, that Scipio had thought the proper moment for the invasion of Carthage.— "What a pity it is that the learned gentleman does not go with this consolation, and the authority of Scipio to the lord mayor and aldermen of the city of London. Let him say, 'Rejoice my friends! Buonaparte is encamped at Blackheath! What happy tidings! For here Scipio tells us, you may every moment expect to hear of lord Hawkesbury making his triumphal entry into Paris†. It would be whimsical to observe how they would receive such joyful news. I should like to see such faces as they would make on that occasion. Though I doubt not of the erudition of the learned gentleman, he seems to me, to have somehow confounded the stories of Hanno and Hannibal, of Scipio and the Romans. He told us that Carthage was lost by the parsimony or envy of Hanno, in preventing the necessary supplies for the war being sent to Hannibal: but he neglected to go a little fur-

* Dr. Lawrence.

† Alludes to a boast of his lordship, at an early period of the war.

ther, and to relate that Hanno accused the latter of having been ambitious—

"Juvenem furentem cupidine regni;"

and assured the senate that Hannibal, though at the gates of Rome, was no less dangerous to Hanno. Be this, however, as it may, is there any Hanno in the British senate? If there is, nothing can be more certain than that all the efforts and remonstrances of the British Hanno could not prevent a single man, or a single guinea being sent for the supply of any Hannibal our ministers might choose. The learned gentleman added, after the defeat of Hannibal, Hanno laughed at the senate; but he did not tell us what he laughed at. The advice of Hannibal has all the appearance of being a good one—

"Carthagis mœnia Romæ munerata."

If they did not follow his advice, they had themselves to blame for it.

From the strain of declamation in which the learned gentleman launched out, it seems as if he came to this house as executor to a man whose genius was scarcely equalled by the excentricities he sometimes indulged. He appears to come as executor, and in the house of commons, to administer to Mr. Burke's fury without any of his fire. It is, however, in vain for him to attempt any imitation of those declamatory harrangues and writings of the transcendent author, which, towards the latter part of his life, were, as I think, unfortunately too much applauded. When not embellished with those ornaments which Mr. Burke was so capable of adding to all he either spoke or wrote, the subject of such declamations could only claim the admiration of a school-boy. The circumstance of a great, extensive and victorious republick, breathing nothing but war in the long exercise of its most successful operations, surrounded with triumphs, and panting for fresh laurels, to be compared, much less represented as inferiour, to the military power of Eng-

land, is childish and ridiculous. What similitude is there between us and the great Roman republick in the height of its fame and glory? Did you, sir, ever hear it stated, that the Roman bulwark was a naval force? And if not, what comparison can there be drawn between their efforts and power? This kind of rhodomontade declamation is finely described in the language of one of the Roman poets—.

——"I demens, curre per Alpes,
"Ut pueris placeas, et DECLAMATIO sia."

Go, fight, to please school-boy statesmen, and furnish a DECLAMATION for a Doctor, learned in the law.

It is a subject of complaint, sir, with the minister, that those who oppose this bill do not state any other mode in which a large and extraordinary supply could be raised within the year. I will, on this, as on every other occasion, speak out my mind candidly. The only way in which this operation can, in my opinion, be effected without great oppression, partiality and injustice, is, in the ordinary manner of a loan, the interest of which loan to be paid by new taxes on articles of luxury, accompanied by a sinking fund for the gradual extinction of the whole. The difficulty of making a loan should not induce any alteration in this method, though I have no hesitation in saying, that if we cannot borrow, our financial system is utterly destroyed. But great as are our embarrassments, I do not think it is yet too late to save it. I would recommend also the experiment on the voluntary contributions, which will afford a test of the spirit of the country. Measures should, moreover, be taken to raise the funds to something nearly approaching their level. Great efforts ought to be used to restore the credit and honour of the bank, which I contend to be at present forfeited; and, above all, every attempt should be made for the restoration of peace. By these means, I still think that much might be effected; but the present scheme, if persisted in, must end in forced contributions, fol-

lowing those forced disclosures which are incompatible with the spirit of any free country.

The proper gound, sir, upon which this bill should be opposed, I conceive to be neither the uncertainty of the criterion, nor the injustice of the retrospect, though they would be sufficient. The tax itself will be found to defeat its own purposes. The amount which an individual paid to the assessed taxes last year, can be no rule for what he shall pay in future. All the articles by which the gradations rose must be laid aside, and never resumed again. Circumstanced as the country is, there can be no hope, no chance whatever, that, if the tax succeeds, it ever will be repealed. Each individual, therefore, instead of putting down this article or that, will make a final and general retrenchment; so that the minister cannot get at him in the same way again, by any outward sign which might be used as a criterion of his wealth. These retrenchments cannot fail of depriving thousands of their bread; and is it vain to hold out the delusion of modification or indemnity to the lower orders. Every burthen imposed upon the rich in the articles which give the poor employment, affects them, not the less, for affecting them circuitously. A coach-maker, for instance, would willingly compromise with the minister, to give him a hundred guineas not to lay the tax upon coaches, for though the hundred guineas would be much more than his proportion of the new tax; yet it would be much better for him to pay the larger contribution, than, by the laying down of coaches, be deprived of those orders by which he got his bread. The same is the case with watch-makers, which I had lately an opportunity of witnessing, who, by the tax imposed last year, are reduced to a state of ruin, starvation, and misery; yet, in proposing that tax, the minister alleged, that the poor journeymen could not be affected, as the tax would only operate on the gentlemen by whom the watches were worn. It is as much cant, therefore, to say, that by bearing heavily on the rich, we are saving the lower orders,

as it is folly to suppose we can come at real income by arbitrary assessment, or by symptoms of opulence. There are three ways of raising large sums of money in a State: First, by voluntary contributions: Secondly, by a great addition of new taxes: and the thirdly, by forced contributions, which is the worst of all, and which I aver the present plan to be. I am at present so partial to the first mode that I recommend the further consideration of this measure to be postponed for a month, in order to make an experiment of what might be effected by it. For this purpose let a bill be brought in, authorizing the proper persons to receive voluntary contributions; and I should not care if it were read a third time to night. I confess, however, that there are many powerful reasons which forbid us to be too sanguine in the success even of this measure. To awaken a spirit in the nation, the example should come from the first authority, and the higher departments of the state. It is, indeed, seriously to be lamented, that whatever may be the burthens or distresses of the people, the government has hitherto never shown a disposition to contribute any thing; and this conduct must hold out a poor encouragement to others. Heretofore all the publick contributions were made for the benefit and profit of the contributors, in a manner inconceivable to more simple nations. If a native inhabitant of Bengal or China were to be informed, that in the west of Europe there was a small island, which, in the course of one hundred years, contributed four hundred and fifty millions to the exigencies of the state, and that every individual, on the making of a demand, vied with his neighbour in alacrity to subscribe, he would immediately exclaim, "Magnanimous nation! you must surely be invincible." But far different would be his sentiments, if informed of the tricks and jobs attending these transactions, where even loyalty was seen cringing for its *bonus!* If the first example were given from the highest authority, there would at least be some hopes of its being followed by other great

men, who received large revenues from the government. I would instance particularly the teller of the exchequer, and another person of high rank, who receive from their offices 13000l. a year more in war than they do in peace. The last noble lord* had openly declared for perpetual war, and could not bring his mind to think of any thing like a peace with the French. Without meaning any personal disrespect, it was the nature of the human mind to receive a bias from such circumstances. So much was this acknowledged in the rules of this house, that any person receiving a pension or high employment from his majesty, thereby vacated his seat. It was not, therefore, unreasonable to expect that the noble lord would contribute his proportion, and that a considerable one, to carry on the war, in order to show the world his freedom from such a bias. In respect to a near relative of that noble lord, I mean the noble marquis,† there could be no doubt of his coming forward liberally. I remember, when I was secretary to the treasury, the noble marquis sent a letter there, requesting that his office might, in point of fees and emoluments, be put under the same economical regulations as the others. The reason he assigned for it was, "the emoluments were so much greater in time of war than peace, that his conscience would be hurt by feeling that he received them from the distresses of his country." No retrenchment, however, took place in that office. If, therefore, the marquis thought proper to bring the arrears since that time also from his conscience, the publick would be at least 40,000l. the better for it. By a calculation I have made, which I believe cannot be controverted, it appears, from the vast increase of our burthens during the war, that if peace were to be concluded to morrow, we should have to provide taxes annually to the amount of 28,000,000l. To this was further to be added, the expense of that system, by which Ireland is not governed, but ground, insulted, and oppressed.

* Lord Grenville. † Marquis of Buckingham.

To find a remedy for all these incumbrances, the first thing to be done is, to restore the credit of the bank, which has failed, as well in credit as in honour. Let it no longer, in the minister's hands, remain the slave of political circumstances. It must continue insolvent till the connexion was broken off. I remember, in consequence of expressions made use of in this house, upon former discussions, when it was thought the minister would relinquish that unnatural and ruinous alliance, the newspapers sported a good deal with the idea that the house of commons had *forbid the banns* between him and the *old lady*. Her friends had interfered, it was said, to prevent the *union*, as it was well known that it was her *dower* he sought, and not her *person* nor the *charms of her society*. The old lady herself, however, when wooed, was quickly won, and nothing could be more indelicate than to observe her soon afterwards ogling her swain, and wontonly courting that violence she at first complained of. In the first instance it might be no more than a case of seduction; but from her subsequent conduct, it became arrant prostitution.—

"I swear I could not see the dear betrayer
"Kneel at my feet, and sigh to be forgiven,
"But my relenting heart would pardon all,
"And quite forget 'twas he that had undone me."

It is, sir, highly offensive to the decency and sense of a commercial people, to observe the juggle between the minister and the bank. The latter vauntingly boasted itself ready and able to pay; but that the minister kindly prevented, and put a *lock and key* upon it. There is a liberality in the British nation which always makes allowance for inability of payment. Commerce requires enterprise, and enterprise is subject to losses. But I believe no indulgence was ever shown to a creditor, saying, "I can, but will not pay you." Such was the real condition of the bank, together with its accounts, when they were laid before the house of commons; and the chairman,* reported from the committee, stating its

* Mr. Bragge.

prosperity, and the great increase of its cash and bullion. The minister, however, took care to verify the old saying, "Bragg is a good dog, but Hold-fast is better."—"Ah!" said he, "my worthy chairman, this is excellent news, but I will take care to secure it." He kept his word, took the money, gave exchequer bills for it, which were no security, and there was then an end to all our publick credit. It is singular enough, sir, that the report upon this bill, stated that it was meant to secure our publick credit from the avowed intentions of the French to make war upon it. This was done most effectually. Let the French come when they please, they cannot touch our publick credit at least. The minister has wisely provided against it, for he has previously destroyed it. The only consolation besides that remains to us, is *his* assurance, that all will return again to its former state at the conclusion of the war. Thus we are to hope, that though the bank now presents a *meagre spectre*, as soon as peace is restored the *golden bust* will make its reappearance. This, however, is far from being the way to inspirit the nation or intimidate the enemy. Ministers have long taught the people of the inferiour order, that they can expect nothing from them but by coercion, and nothing from the great but by corruption. The highest encouragement to the French will be to observe the publick supineness. Can they have any apprehension of national energy or spirit in a people whose minister is eternally oppressing them.

Though, sir, I have opposed the present tax, I am still conscious that our existing situation requires great sacrifices to be made, and that a foreign enemy must at all events be resisted. I behold in the measures of the minister nothing except the most glaring incapacity, and the most determined hostility to our liberties; but we must be content, if necessary for preserving our independence from foreign attack, to *strip to the skin.* "It is an established maxim," we are told, that men must give up a part for the preservation of the remainder. I do not dispute the justice of the

maxim. But this is the constant language of the gentleman opposite to me. We have already given up part after part, nearly till the whole is swallowed up. If I had a pound, and a person asked me for a shilling to preserve the rest, I should willingly comply, and think myself obliged to him. But if he repeated that demand till he came to my *twentieth shilling*, I should ask him: Where is the *remainder?* Where is my *pound* now? Why, my friend, that is no *joke* at all. Upon the whole, sir, I see no salvation for the country but in the conclusion of a peace, and the removal of the present ministers.

MR. PITT'S SPEECH,

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON THE THIRD READING OF THE BILL FOR THE NEW ASSESSED TAXES.

IT has already been remarked in the introduction to this debate, that the bill encountered a vehement resistance in every stage of its progress. The leading members as well of the opposition, as the ministry mutually availed themselves of the privilege of each reading of the bill to attack or to defend it. In the speech of the chancellor of the exchequer, with which the discussion was closed, is exhibited a very luminous summary of the objections urged by those in hostility to the tax, and, a confutation of them, which at once eclipsed all the bright hopes that were entertained of its impairing the popularity of the administration. But it did not require the exertion of Mr. Pitt's eloquence to effect this purpose. To demonstrate the expediency and the faultlessness of the measure, the course pursued by the opposition was alone sufficient.

Disciplined as that phalanx were in this species of contention, which had wonderfully quickened their natural perspicacity to espy and to expose the lurking errours of any measure, we find nevertheless, in the speeches of the most acute and experienced of its members, even of Fox, and Sheridan, not a critical analysis of the principles, or clear development of the evil tendency of the bill, but a desperate resort to a wild, loose, and desultory discussion of extraneous

topicks, which having been often before examined and decided by parliament, had become the hackneyed themes of vulgar invective and popular clamour.

SPEECH, &c.

MR. SPEAKER,

AFTER the great length of time that has been consumed in the debate, the house, I am sure, will not be surprised if I should desire to avoid, as much as possible, the vast mass of extraneous matter that has been brought forward on the present occasion, and select from the numerous topicks that present themselves to my view, such as bear directly on the subject under our immediate consideration. With this design I shall endeavour to guide the attention of the house through the various irrelevent and contradictory arguments that have been used, and fix it more exclusively on those leading and practical points, which alone can determine the question we are now called upon to decide. I should have thought it, sir, unnecessary to enter at any length into this argument, after the admission made by the several gentlemen who most vehemently oppose this measure, if I did not find that the principle they conceded in name is afterwards recalled in *substance*, and treated as a matter foreign to their consideration, and wholly inapplicable to the case now before them. The principle I allude to is this: *Whether, in the present circumstances of this country, there is or is not an occasion to make a great and unexampled exertion to defeat the projects of the enemy, and secure our own national independence and honour?*

The affirmative of this proposition has been uniformly admitted and openly avowed. Unless, therefore, the house, influenced by what has been advanced in the course of this night's debate, should think proper expressly to retract that opinion, I have a right to take it as the fundamental point that will govern their determination. This is not an opinion

hastily adopted, and lightly considered. It is the language which, after full deliberation and inquiry, the house, at the commencement of the session, presented at the foot of the throne. Such, at that time, was their opinion, and the facts on which it was founded, have in the interval which has elapsed, been neither weakened nor denied.

So far from any thing having been advanced contrary to this position, in the course of this debate, the right honourable gentleman * has unequivocally admitted, that a great military and financial exertion is indispensable in the present situation of the country. Now, having advanced so much it was natural to expect he would disclose the nature of those exertions, the necessity of which he did not deny; and if he disapproved of the present mode of raising so considerable a part of the supplies within the year, that he would point out how that end might be obtained, by means less objectionable. The question, as now argued by the right honourable gentleman, is, whether after a delay of six weeks since the first agitation of this subject, and two months since the issue of the negotiation, from which period the necessity of the exertions he admits must be dated; whether, after such a delay, all exertions should not be suspended on the part of the country, till the house should obtain the dismission of his majesty's present ministers, a *radical* parliamentary reform, and a total change of system? Such is the ground, if I followed the right honourable gentleman, and understood him right, on which he wishes the present question to be determined.

In his opinion the guilt of the present administration is so enormous, their general and particular misconduct so manifest and great, that all the faculties of government should be suspended till they are removed. Their removal alone, however, will not do, and he has no hopes of security without a radical reform in parliament, and a total change of system; and, unless

* Mr. Fox.

these latter points are conceded, he professes that he will not take any share in any new administration that may be formed. With a view of persuading the house to pursue these objects, much time and much eloquence had been consumed, to convince them that they had a regular constitutional right to withhold the supplies till the grievances of which they might think proper to complain were redressed. But time and eloquence appear to me to have been wholly misemployed. No one that I know of ever doubted of the validity of that doctrine. The true question now was, according to the right honourable gentleman's mode of reasoning, not whether they had a right under the constitution of withholding supplies till grievances were redressed, but whether the house and country look upon those things as grievances which the right honourable gentleman does; and whether they will make such an exercise of power in the present situation of the country, to obtain a radical parliamentary reform and total change of system, according to his acceptation of those expressions? It becomes, therefore, of great consequence to ascertain what that acceptation is; and if any ambiguity or uncertainty exists from loose and indefinite expressions, the true meaning will be found to arise no less from the colour and complexion of circumstances which accompany, precede, and follow his professions than logical distinctions and the context of words.

Now I wish to put it seriously to the house, whether, notwithstanding the explanations for the first time given this night by the right honourable gentleman of the extent of his meaning in this respect, whether a very considerable portion of uncertainty, as to their extent, does not yet remain, and whether all the exertion he himself admits necessary for the salvation of the country, is to be suspended till objects, so general, loose, and indefinite, are obtained; for such is the partial result of all he has now advanced. To descend to the few particulars he has mentioned—a change of ministers, he says, is absolutely necessary before any peace, consistent with the welfare and se-

curity of the country, can be expected. Yet how was this attempted to be proved? I do not consider myself much indebted to the right honourable gentleman's candour in admitting, that at least ministers were sincere in the last negotiation for peace. No man, in or out of the house, could venture to entertain a doubt of a fact so plain and manifest. The internal evidences of the treaty itself, and every circumstance by which it was attended, set every suspicion on that subject at defiance. The purity and zeal of ministers throughout the whole of their conduct on that occasion, is established beyond the possibility of doubt. It is not now for me to enter into the discussion how far in 1794 and 1795, France was capable of preserving the relations of peace and amity.

Every thing that the right honourable gentleman could urge on this subject, was advanced when the facts of that question were recent, and regularly before the house, which, after full inquiry and deliberation, gave an opinion contrary to that which he maintained. Every step that ministers have taken, relative to peace, has been submitted to parliamentary discussion, and is fully before the publick. And I can assert with confidence, that no man can reflect upon their conduct in that respect, or deny that they have done every thing to obtain peace, short of sacrificing the honour and welfare of the country. According to the right honourable gentleman's own view of the subject, it is a singular mode of reasoning, to threaten ministers with dismission, that peace might be obtained, because they had not done every thing in their power to obtain it before, though there is no doubt they have since been, and were still disposed so to do. The reasoning is still more curious if followed further. Suppose the measures recommended by the right honourable gentleman were adopted, is it likely that any new administration could succeed in negotiation with the enemy, after a considerable suspension of exertion and comparative weakness, when the present administration, backed with the whole strength of the

country, and having done every thing consistent with their duty to appease the wrath of the enemy, had failed? Who will undertake that, in case of an appointment of a new administration, by means at least injurious to our strength, the enemy will be inclined to give terms of peace which they denied to the present ministers, when their conduct was admitted by all to be such, as this new administration could alone adopt? What ground of probability is there to expect such an event?

But if the right honourable gentleman's argument has any weight, it is at best ill-timed at present, and should have been argued two months ago, on the first termination of the treaty. The right honourable gentleman has attempted to draw a distinction between the responsibility of those in office, and those who are not so. In this, however, I do not see any marks of that impartiality which should equally guide both the one and the other. He seems to think, that while he has a perfect right to arraign the conduct of publick men in office, that he, being a private member of parliament, is not answerable to any account. I certainly know of no sanction that any man in office has, that should exempt him from animadversion on his conduct; and as little am I acquainted with any exemption that private gentlemen may have from reprehension, when their conduct is such as to deserve it. Justice, prudence, and expediency as little exempt the one as the other.

I therefore cannot but behold the right honourable gentleman as amenable in his conduct as any other person, whether I consider his character, in relation to domestick concerns at home, or the situation of the enemy abroad. With specious professions of humility, he has doubtless declared himself a *simple individual*, and expressed a determination to abstain from the risk and fatigue of publick office. But what does this amount to? Is it not certain that, thinking as many around him do, the country can alone be saved by him—Thinking so, I say, if a change of administration should take place, will they not feel

themselves bound to overcome his scruples, and insist as a matter of publick duty, that he should take upon him the burthen of office? Nay, sir, I put it to them whether they would not consider it as the pride and glory of their lives, by any means in their power, to place him in the station to which they think his talents entitle him; and if they think so, they will, in so doing, do no more than what, according to their view of the subject, is right, and highly laudable in them to effect. Nevertheless those who might differ from them in that opinion, and though admitting the brilliancy and extent of the right honourable gentleman's talents, think that the practical application of them is not conducive to the welfare of the country. Such persons must be allowed to look at that event with repugnance and alarm.

Upon this subject I have no hesitation of declaring, that were I obliged to plead guilty to every other charge against my colleagues and myself, or from any motive should wish to relinquish my present station, yet, while I wish such a peace as is consistent with the security and welfare of this kingdom, I should feel it as a bounden and overruling duty, if the right hon. gentleman had any chance of succeeding me, to remain in office at any risk, and with every sacrifice, in order to prevent an effect so fatal and ruinous to the safety and consequence of this country, as the gratification of the wishes of him and his friends.

I have yet to learn, what is the nature of that *confidence* which the enemy are to have in an administration supported by that right hon. gentleman. I have on a former occasion said, that I do not envy those whose boast it is, that they stand high in the confidence of the enemy. It is maintained, that in case of a change of administration, the house and the country would have the most unlimited confidence as to the sincerity of the negotiation for peace; and if it could not be obtained on terms adequate to a just and reasonable expectation, that in such a case the war will be continued with incalculable advantage. Will those who think in this way attempt to deny that the right hon. gentle-

man and all his friends have uniformly since the commencement of the war, maintained the cause of the enemy, at least so far as to contend that they acted on the defensive, and retained a right of inflicting vengeance and that we were the aggressors? Throughout the whole course of the war they have asserted the justice of the enemy's cause, and the insufficiency of our resources. How, in case of such men succeeding to offices, terms favourable or just to this country can be expected; or how, if the war is to be continued, the enemy are to be convinced of the energy of the kingdom, and permanency of our means, I I leave, with no doubt of its decision, to the prudence of the house.

The next point of attack on his majesty's ministers is, their general misconduct in respect to general constitutional doctrines; and then that they are bad financial ministers, and incompetent to preserve the combination, which, as to the prosecution of the war, they had relied so much on. These points, I must observe, have repeatedly been discussed and decided in this house, and are wholly irrelevant to the present question, and may without any interferences be decided again after this is determined, as they have been before. These I do not in the least consider myself bound to enter into at present, and if I did, the decision, either one way or the other, would not affect this bill. Upon these subjects, however, it is obvious that the strength of the right honourable gentleman's arguments lies in this. He says, you, the administration of the country, are incompetent and ignorant; you rely on foreign alliance; these alliances desert you; you grant subsidies; you guaranty loans. We told you this would not secure you allies. You are fools and we are wise. This I believe is not a weak summary of his charge against those he is inclined to condemn in every act, and impeach the motives when he cannot deny the effect. I ask, however, and put to the recollection of the house, whether those loans, subsidies, and alliances were ever maintained on any such principle as that it

was impossible to be deceived. In the nature of the thing, no independent state can have security against another, from want of foresight and prudence. It is no imputation against one ally, that another might not see so acutely its own true, permanent, interest and safety. In the case of our acting with greater wisdom and resolution than others, we are not to let our regret at their misconduct overrule our own satisfaction in our own prudence and sagacity. Even to this very moment I do not regret those loans, subsidies, and alliances of which the right honourable gentleman complains. They were entered into with true views of the lasting and real interest of the country; and though the assistance we have received was less than, with a view to the respective interest of the parties, we deserved, yet it was full as much as we had earned. I could have wished those powers had a true sense of their own interest; but as a matter of policy I do not regret the advantage we derived at the expense at which it was purchased.

When it is considered that the conduct of ministers with respect to peace, was such as those who wish for a change themselves, approve. It is pretty certain, that the real cause for their retirement is not that which is ostensibly assigned. But whether the motives be real or pretended, it can be no reason for postponing the present bill, as whether the present administration continue or yield their places to others, this bill, as a measure essential to the security of the country from the menaces and designs of a rancorous enemy, would be equally expedient and necessary.

Suppose the right honourable gentleman was at the head of a new formed administration, would he tell the house that he would expect any success in his treaty, should the nation disarm, or be unprovided to continue the contest with vigour and effect? Were he minister, the same exertion would be necessary, the same question would revert, whether it was expedient to raise 7 of the 19,000,000l. within the year. Is it therefore fair, or generous, or manly,

to hear the possibility of a change assigned as a cause for a delay, a measure which, under every administration, would be equally necessary, and must be made equally the subject of discussion.

There must be some secret motive for this sudden exertion of the right honourable gentleman. It was most probably to take advantage of what he supposed the publick opinion, that he thus appeared again in embattled phalanx, and left the hidden path of secret warfare.* With what other view would he otherwise bring into such a debate all the inflammatory topicks he has urged, and, in a very long speech, though attending, as he says, by the express commands of his constituents, scarce touch on the subject which he avowedly came forward to discuss? Instead of attending to the details and particular bearings of this bill, he adverts only to its principle in the most general terms, and did not even attend in that stage in which alone, by means of regulations, he could alleviate those hardships of which his constituents complain. Far from attending to the instructions he professed to obey, he enters into the most foreign and dissuasive questions concerning the origin and conduct of the war, in which, as usual, he decides in favour of France and against this country, and in favour of himself and party, against the ministers in which his majesty thought proper to confide. He wishes to impose on the house the condition of putting off the discussion of the bill he was sent here to discuss, in order to enforce that radical reform of parliament and total change of system, of which his constituents in their instruction, said nothing, and which if he thought it his duty to urge, he should have felt it his duty to attend for that purpose without waiting for those injunctions which were the occasion of his presence.

I, for one, should be glad to have a clear idea of what the right honourable gentleman means by this *species* of reform and change. He has, on former

* Mr. Fox had for some time withdrawn from parliament.

occasions, expressed the same wishes, but yet in a way more general. In the course of what he has said on this subject to night, we have at least the satisfaction of learning, that he looks only to these changes through the organ of parliament, which, however, he expects will not be affected by the power of his eloquence or the force of his reasoning within, but by the influence of the publick mind from without.

The precise plan of parliamentary reform of which he is the advocate, is now for the first time disclosed: namely, that brought forward last session by another honourable friend of his, not now in his place.* Thus then for a plan of parliamentary reform, which the house had already discussed and rejected, and for other particular reformations, on which neither his constituents nor the publick had expressed any opinion at all, for these purposes he wished the house to suspend and hang up all the means of publick defence, in a crisis of unexampled danger and difficulty.

This mode of obtaining his objects is certainly less mild and regular than the one he professes himself attached to, and recommended with respect to a parliamentary reform: for it tends to this: *suspend your exertions, let the enemy come and make this change of system and reform* the price of self defence, an expedient at least hazardous and rash, under the present circumstances of the country.

If, to avoid this inference, the right honourable gentleman should contend, that by the influence of the publick mind, he means the operation of the fair, rational sense of the publick mind on their representatives only, then he must admit that he has at last found something more sympathetick between the people and their representatives, than he thinks it possible to discover in some views of the subject he occasionally takes, a consistent ground of virtual and effective representation, even in the present form of parliament.

* Mr. Grey.

If he means neither of those, but *something else*, different from both, but which he does not think it fit and prudent at this moment explicitly to state, his views are then evidently open to the objection, on the ground of *ambiguity and indistinctness*, which an honourable friend * of mine had said occasioned diffidence and alarm.

He has thought proper, on this and several other occasions, to quote some words used by me in reference to this subject. It is impossible to recollect particular words used so long ago; but I frankly admit that my views of parliamentary reform were favourable to that object, and that I on all occasions expressed my opinion with all the warmth of expression I could use; these however must, in common candour, be understood in reference to that object as at that time understood, and not as to the change of meaning that expression has undergone in later times. He has done me the justice to say, that he believes it was not me who declared, "that no good government would subsist, nor bad one be opposed with safety, without parliamentary reform." But whatever words I may have used, or to whatever doctrines I may have subscribed, they must be understood in reference only to the ideas of parliamentary reform then entertained, and I solemnly declare that whatever I may have said or done on that subject, had no relation to the present prevailing system of reformation, or any principle on which they are founded. My ideas then were as different from those systems then as my language is now.

I always, as is well known to the right honourable gentleman, opposed every plan of universal suffrage and individual representation. All the words I then used, all the measures I then abetted, must be considered as bearing a relation to the ideas and views of things then entertained.

By the same rate the right honourable gentleman must now be judged, the words he uses will be un-

* Mr. Wilberforce.

derstood, unless otherwise restricted, by the ideas and views of things now received: and surely he cannot deny that the expressions he has this night made use of to signify his wishes, constitute the watch words of a party out of doors, whose *real* meaning is well understood, and admits of no doubt. Is it not known that they couple their ideas to his words, that they hail him as a convert to their system, and a champion in their cause?

If, indeed, the right honourable gentleman does mean something in a more limited and rational sense, sure I am, he must be thankful for that scrupulous vigilance and alarm, that wishes to distinguish his views of a radical reform in parliament, from those entertained by the Corresponding Society; he accidentally expressed himself in precisely the same words which that body has thought proper to adopt. It happens, however, that there is further coincidence subsisting between that body and the right honourable gentleman than mere words. He has not only, they seem to think, exalted, like them, the representative government, but looks with a most jealous eye to nobility and hereditary honours; in short, disclaims every principle of government but the representative species. This, I believe, is well known to be their opinion of him, though undoubtedly he will contend that they misconceive the meaning of his words, and that they do not imply the object they suppose.

Whatever may be his meaning on other points, he has now, however, fully explained the views he entertains of parliamentary reform; and I must declare, that I would forego for ever all prospect of reform, rather than incur the risk of such a one as he wishes, by his own confession, may take place. What is it he contends for? No less than that the whole elective franchise should be taken from those in whom it has long resided, and transferred to all the householders in the kingdom. This is the preliminary not only to all supply and exertion, but to other changes hitherto unlimited by any designation of their objects.

After concealing his opinion for fourteen years, as to his specifick plan of reform, it now appears no less than a total change of the old system of election, and a substitute that will at once demolish all the benefits connected with it. In short, he would take from the old electors all their rights, and invest them, without reserve, in new.

The right honourable gentleman has further expressed, as a general principle, that he wishes to repress increasing power, and encourage protecting liberty. In the first place, I wish to know what he means by these terms. I here remark the same uncertainty and ambiguity that appear in most of his professions, and which occasion no groundless degree of distrust and alarm, in those who do not enter so readily into his views as those immediately around him. I wish to know what is this increasing power he wishes to reprobate, and what is this protecting liberty he means to encourage?

In another part of his speech he says, that the authority of parliament ought to be such as it was before the American war. Here also I am at a loss to reach the meaning of his words. I know of no liberty then possessed that is now equally enjoyed. On professions so loose and indefinite, it would be absurd to rely; unless they were circumscribed by distinct meaning, they never can be adopted as a safe and rational ground of action.

Another commentator on the acts of government* has, in addition to the charges advanced by the right honourable gentleman, insisted, that an end shall be put to the possibility of making a breach in the appropriation act. This charge is not now for the first time brought forward. It was fully and regularly discussed on a former occasion, when first advanced; and how did it turn out?—that the appropriation act had not been violated; but that, under particular circumstances, the form had been departed from to preserve its spirit. The same may be observed with

respect to the charges advanced relative to barracks, and the laws concerning persons sent out of the kingdom; the right of assembling, petitioning, and all the other instances advanced as matters of criminal charges against the administration of government by his majesty's present ministers, which at this late hour it will hardly be expected that I have strength sufficient minutely to examine and answer.

The sum total of these objections amount to this, that the house should at once repeal all those wise precautions and measures which, after an anxious view to the particular circumstances of the times, and an adequate discussion of each particular they had thought proper to enact, not only with the consent of a vast majority of their own body, but with that of at least nine tenths of the people out of doors. All those wise domestick regulations are no less essential to our security, than the exertions of military force. Is the house and country prepared for such sacrifices, such sweeping preliminaries?

The honourable gentleman objects also to the conduct of ministers with respect to peerages. Here, too, he was, as usual, general and indistinct.—What is it he means? Does he intend to say, the prerogative of the crown to create peers should be extinguished? How does he limit his objections? What exceptions are they that he makes? Does he mean that no vacancies should be filled up, that he may supply a large arrearage, when he comes into power in the way used, when, as he says, "peerage was given as an honour." Till particulars are mentioned it is impossible to reply to such vague charges, which rather impeach the constitution than criminate the ministers.—These, however, are the principal allegations, for which it is contended that ministers deserve to be dismissed from their offices, in order that others, more competent to forward the national interests, should serve the publick in their stead.

If we pass the bill, the right honourable gentleman says, that we shall not be considered as the representatives of the people, intimating thereby some

doubt, at least, that we are not now the substantial and virtual representatives of that body. How does he make this assertion good? Because, he says, large meetings of the people have expressed their disapprobation of the bill; and, therefore, if we do not adopt their opinions, he infers we have no sympathy with them, and in no sense whatever can be called their representatives. In the first place, I must observe, that these meetings were only held in the metropolis; that in other parts of the kingdom no disapprobation has been manifested; and that even in the metropolis itself the opposition has a good deal subsided since the modifications, which had removed the principal causes of objection. In the next place, I shall never agree that this house, as the representatives of the people, are bound to bend to every partial and unsettled opinion of that body. I mean not to deny that we should give due weight to the influence of publick opinion; but it never was the principle of the constitution that the representatives of the people should shift with every breath of popular desire. Nothing could be more inconsistent with true wisdom and publick utility, than that the legislators should be influenced by every fleeting and partial expression of publick will. How easy was it, in the present case, by misrepresentation and imperfect views of the bill in its operation, to raise in the first instance, a popular clamour against it. A general disinclination towards it appeared in the publick meetings within the metropolis; but no sooner was the subject fully understood, and its particular hardships removed, than it was regarded in a very different light, as appeared by the proceedings of the common hall in the city, and other parts.

The gentlemen opposite to me are ready enough, on all occasions, not only to condemn the conduct of his majesty's ministers; but also to make the publick a party to their cause. I have not only a right to consider them as prejudiced in this respect; but, from frequent experience, erroneous also: for in many cases where they have as loudly maintained the publick

opinion was with them, on a fair inquiry, where occasion offered, we have found the fact to be directly the reverse. Is it, in the nature of things, that a heavy and general tax can, in the first instance, be popular? And, on the contrary, it ever must be the easiest of all things, by artifice and misrepresentation, to raise a clamour against any such measure on its first breaking upon the publick mind. It is hardly possible for such a tax to be popular and cheerfully received. All taxes are necessarily hardships, and must be submitted to; not from pleasure, but a sense of publick duty. And I hope, with confidence, that this tax will be so received by the good sense and fortitude of the people; and that when it comes explained and amended, they will submit to the sacrifices it enjoins, as a measure of urgent necessity, under circumstances of the most severe trial that this nation ever experienced. It does not, however, enter into my ideas of publick duty, that the legislature should consult the popular opinion, at the expense of publick safety.

There was one part of the right hon. gentleman's speech that I am impelled to notice, from the extraordinary request it contained. He admitted the great use of unanimity, and allowed, that in this critical period in particular, it was highly desirable. The mode, however, in which he means to obtain it is somewhat singular. He says, we the minority, conceiving ourselves right, will not yield to you the majority; but as unanimity is desirable, you should undoubtedly come over to our opinion. So that the majority are thus called upon at once to forego their opinions, though adopted after long and frequent debate, and to tread back all their steps, and admit themselves to be wrong, although they knew themselves to be right. This was the *reasonable request* his arguments conveyed; and we were told that a zealous unanimity was to be expected on no other terms. In like manner he requires us to postpone the bill indefinitely, though arising from urgent necessity, and calculated for security and defence, until he shall, *in*

his good time, return to his parliamentary duty; and, as occasion suits, unfold to our view, for separate discussion, all the parts of that radical change in our system that he projects.

As to the principles of individual conduct in this house, it is not now a general question of how far a member is authorized to secede from his attendance; but, in my opinion, that virtual representation of which the right honourable gentleman is so fond, cannot be more completely violated, than by a dereliction of duty, particularly in a moment of imminent danger to the country. And this is doubtless aggravated, if it should be done with a view of depreciating the body of which he is a member, and to alienate the affections of the people from it. I can hardly conceive how any man can act in grosser violation of his duty, as a member of parliament, than by such a conduct. Much of the fact, in such a case, must be collected from attendant circumstances.

I shall not now inquire by what motives those gentlemen acted,* alluded to by the right honourable gentleman, who seceded in the American war; but I recollect that his own secession was announced after a motion made by an honourable gentleman, † for a parliamentary reform; and that in the course of that debate the right honourable gentleman said, that unless the measures were adopted, the house would not be any longer entitled to the respect of the people out of doors. As to the general principle, nothing can be more certain than that it is a violation of duty to desert a post committed to one's charge; and that, in exact proportion as the danger of those for whom we undertake the charge increases. Now it did so happen, that the right honourable gentleman could not, in his whole political career, have chosen a moment of secession more encompassed with danger than the

* Mr. Burke and others of his party.

† Mr. Grey.

one in which he actually did secede. The motive, therefore, is at best suspicious, and declining to attend under such circumstances, led at least to inquire, whether by keeping away he sought opportunities to effect that, by inflaming the people without these walls, which no exertion of his talents could achieve within. He retired just as the rancour of our enemy became more inveterate, and exclusively directed to this country; and when the manifestations of their malice called forth the spirit and zeal of all classes, to support our national independence and honour. Just at this juncture it was that the right honourable gentleman thought proper to retire.

On what ground is it the gentlemen oppose this bill? Do they deny the danger that surrounds us? Do they maintain, that the exertion is not necessary? That it can be suspended with safety? No. They do not attempt to do either: but, as the means of obtaining their own projects, they are willing to risk the honour, welfare, and existence of the country.

The right honourable gentleman had asserted his right to secede on his own motives of expediency, and, of course, those who surround him will not object if I take their justification on the same principle. But the right honourable gentleman, it seems, retains his opinion of that expediency, and only now appears at the particular injunction of his constituents, to defend their local interest. How comes it then that he appears so surrounded with friends, who, adopting this principle of secession, have not in the desire of their constituents the same motive for his particular exertion? Can any thing show in a stronger light the blind acquiescence of party zeal, when, in defiance of every avowed principle of their publick conduct, they now attend to add to the splendour of their leader's entry.

There is one point in the constitution of this country, in which difference of opinion arises, namely, concerning the instructions of constituents to their representatives. Some think themselves bound to obey them, whatever their individual opinion may

be on the subject. Others thinking those instructions entitled to respect, yet follow the dictates of their own consciences. Of this latter class the right honourable gentleman professes himself to be. According, therefore, to his own admission, he now attends in spite of his own opinion of the expediency of secession, to discuss the local interest of his constituents. He, nevertheless, declined attending in that stage of the bill, in which alone he could be of service in that particular, by proposing relief for the particular hardships his constituents might sustain; and now without noticing the modification made, he objects to other particulars, without suggesting or moving any remedy. He came here to oppose its local and partial effect, yet indulges only in a general and indiscriminate opposition to it; and professing to come for the express purpose of discussing this bill, he introduces every topick that has been decided during the long period of his absence. The house must therefore decide, in what spirit and for what real purpose he attends. Nothing that he has said can be understood as touching in any degree the question now before us. He may, indeed, be said to reproach his majesty's ministers, but can with no propriety be said to speak to the subject for which his constituents directed him to attend.

With respect to many objections urged in the course of the debate, I must say in general, that if gentlemen had attended in the proper stages of the bill, they would have heard them answered. It is not that the objections are unanswerable; but they have not heard the answers that have been given by neglecting to attend when it was their duty to be present. Upon the question of a great and unusual exertion, no doubt is made. All agree that it is indispensable. Now if this is to be made, the next inquiry is: in what manner is it to be done? From whence arises this secondary question: whether it is to be done in the usual mode of raising supplies, or by raising a considerable portion of the sum requisite for the current services within the year? Upon this

latter question the right honourable gentleman * is dubious; his right honourable friend † thinks that a sum should be raised by a great exertion within the year.

There is one objection to the present plan not easy to comprehend, namely, that by this mode of exertion, I only relieve the stocks so far as to affect a few particular friends of ministers: for the old stockholders, who bought in before the war, it is said, cannot be hurt, inasmuch as they manifest an intention of retaining their capital and receive the same interest, and therefore no depreciation of the funds can injure them. This, however, is a very fallacious and defective view of the subject: for property, the nature of which is transferrable, must always depend on the value of that transfer. Is it nothing to prevent the depreciation of 200,000,000l. in capital, or can that be said only to affect a few particular friends of a minister? If further loans are to be made for the publick service, is it of no consequence whether the funds are at forty or forty-eight per cent.? Does it make no difference whether money is borrowed for the publick at four, five, or six per cent? Has the price of stocks no effect on commerce and agriculture, if they fall below a certain point? According to this plan it is not property that is directly taxed, but expenditure is made the criterion of income in its application.

I admit that some inequalities will be found; but so there must in every plan of raising a considerable sum within the year, and this only forms an objection to the plan, in case it can be shown that the same sum can be raised by means less partial and irregular. There have been instances of large sums raised within the year, but in no instance by means less liable to the objection of regularity.

On the whole, the house will decide whether they will, under the present circumstances of the country, make a great and unusual exertion to resist the ene-

* Mr. Fox. † Mr. Sheridan.

my; or whether, on the arguments they have heard, suspend all defensive precautions, and leave the country open to the ruinous projects of an insolent and overbearing enemy.

Notwithstanding the right honourable gentleman* has intimated his intention to persevere in his retirement, I leave this question to the house, in full confidence that they will so decide on this, and every other occasion, as most effectually to support the independence and permanent interest of the country.

* Mr. Fox.

THE SPEECH

OF THE HON. THOMAS ERSKINE,

ON THE TRIAL OF LORD GEORGE GORDON FOR HIGH TREASON. TRIED BEFORE LORD MANSFIELD CHIEF JUSTICE OF ENGLAND.

IN the tenth year of the reign of William and Mary, the parliament of England passed an act for the alleged purpose of preventing the ascendency of popery, which, being moulded in precise conformity to the sour, intolerant, and distrustful spirit of the times, contained provisions that stripped the catholicks of their dearest privileges, and bore them down with the heaviest oppression.

It is hardly to be credited that this statute, the loathsome feature of their legal code, and the hideous monument of the benighted wisdom of their legislature was permitted, "with all its enormities on its head" to survive, and even occasionally to be enforced during a century, by a nation the most wise, the most liberal, and the most enlightened in the world. At length, however, a just sense of the moral turpitude, the political inexpediency, and the national ignominy of the measure was awakened, and each house of parliament with one according voice voted its condem-

nation. To sir George Saville, of whom it has eloquently been said "that when an act of great and signal humanity was to be done with all the weight and authority that belonged to it, the world could cast its eyes upon none but him," was assigned the grateful office of moving its repeal. On the 14th of May, 1778, he made the important motion.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary unanimity with which the repeal was carried in parliament, it was destined to encounter out of doors, as violent an opposition as ever was excited by popular phrensy and fanatick delusion.

Catching, with their usual discernment, the preposterous idea, that this salutary concession to their fellow subjects was dictated by an undue inclination to popery, the populace became every where exceedingly exasperated, and burned with a zeal more ardent than that which actuated the primitive protestants against *Anti-Christ*. But it was in Scotland that these discontents assumed first a serious aspect. Fomented by the machinations of religious enthusiasts, and turbulent demagogues they soon arose there, in many of the larger cities, to a series of riots and terrible outrages. Defying the civil power, mobs of incendiaries stalked abroad, and with relentless fury burnt or otherwise destroyed the chapels, the dwelling houses, or whatever property belonging to the catholicks that they met with in their fell career. To wage a still more determined hostility against the encroachments of popery, associations numerous and extensive, were organized. By these proceedings, parliament was induced to withhold for the present, *any relief to the Scotch catholicks*.

Encouraged by the successful resistance of the zealots of the north, the English fanaticks now thought that by pursuing the same vigorous course they might compel the entire repeal of the recent system of toleration. In exact imitation, therefore, of those of Scotland, societies were created, consisting chiefly of the mere dregs and feculence of city population, but embracing some designing leaders, and a few honest,

though bigotted characters who contemplated popery in the same disgusting light in which it existed, in the worst ages of ignorant credulity, and clerical usurpation.

For several months these humble associations were allowed to meet, and to deliberate undisturbed by any interference on the part of government, and it is highly probable that they would have vented their enthusiasm for the protestant interests in idle declamation, and vapouring resolves, had they not been joined by a nobleman who was every way calculated to rouse their prejudices and to bring them into active exertions.

"Lord George Gordon, younger brother of an illustrious family, was a youth of ingenuity, and volatile fancy, but little guided by prudence or sound judgment. Wild and chimerical in his notions; ungovernable in his passions, and excessive in dissipation, he was peculiarly marked by eccentricity of conduct. To such a character the extravagance of fanatical theology was no less adapted than any other fanciful hypothesis to dazzle his imagination, or impassioned enthusiasm to inflame his heart. He was, besides, fond of distinction. In the house of commons, his lively and desultory sarcasms afforded relief to serious debate, but he was by no means qualified for attaining eminence as a senator. Emulous, rather than ambitious, if he acquired notoriety he little regarded either the means or the objects. In Scotland, he had taken an active share in the violence of the former year, and had corresponded with the most noted of the fanatical demagogues. In England, he intimated to the protestant club his theological sympathy, and proud of a titled associate, these persons complimented him with the offer of the president's chair. The association from this moment put on quite a new character. Resolutions of the most inflammatory description were immediately adopted.

Before an immense concourse of people, which met on the 29th of May, 1780, the president concluded a speech that was received with the loudest bursts

of popular applause, by moving: *that on a certain day the whole Protestant Association should proceed to the house of commons to present a petition against popery*, which had been previously prepared and adopted. On the 2d of June, the time prescribed, more than fifty thousand persons assembled, and marched with their petition to parliament. The petition being presented, was rejected by a majority of one hundred and ninety-two, to six. The mob instantly began to wreak their vengeance, and for six successive days they perpetrated every species of mischief and depredation which lawless atrocity and religious phrensy operating on disappointed expectations could provoke. Finally suppressed by the introduction of the military, lord George Gordon was apprehended by a warrant from the secretary of state, and committed a prisoner to the tower. Not long afterwards he was arraigned on a charge of treason. Mr. Erskine, as one of his counsel on this memorable trial, pronounced the subsequent speech to which criticism has assigned a very conspicuous place among the more celebrated productions of forensick eloquence. The duty which especially devolved on Mr. Erskine was that of replying to the evidence, a department of his profession in which he is reputed to excel all his cotemporaries. No one can read the present speech without being forcibly struck with his uncommon ability in this respect.

After delivering the doctrine of treason as established by the act of Edward the Third, and expounded by the best authorities, he makes a most ingenious and adroit application of those rules to the testimony in the case in which he was then engaged. This speech, in short, displays much legal knowledge, and dexterity of statement, the force of logick, and some of the loftiest flights of genuine oratory. The exordium is happy and exceedingly appropriate. It is after the best manner of Cicero.

The peroration is no less beautiful. Dispersed through the body of the speech, are many very highly

wrought passages. He finishes his commentary on the testimony with a bold and impassioned exclamation. "I say *by God*, that man is a ruffian, who shall, after this, presume to build upon such honest, artless conduct as an evidence of guilt." Though, perhaps, not altogether consistent with the temperance of modern eloquence, such an exclamation is warranted by a thousand examples in the ancient orations.

The prisoner was acquitted. For this verdict we cannot help thinking, plausible as is his defence, that he owed more to the habitual clemency of British juries than to his own innocence.

SPEECH, &c.

GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY,

MR. KENYON having informed the court that we propose to call no other witnesses, it is now my duty to address myself to you as counsel for the noble prisoner at the bar, the whole evidence being closed. I use the word closed, because it is certainly not finished, since I have been obliged to leave the place in which I sat, to disentangle myself from the volumes of names which lay there under my feet, which, if it had been necessary for the prisoner's defence, would have confirmed all the facts that are already in evidence before you.

Gentlemen, I feel myself entitled to expect, both from you and from the court, the greatest indulgence and attention. I am, indeed, more an object of your compassion than even my noble friend whom I am defending. He rests secure in conscious innocence, and in the well placed assurance, that his innocence can suffer no stain in your hands. Not so with me. I stand before you a troubled, I am afraid a *guilty* man, in having presumed to accept of the awful task, which I am now called upon to perform, one which my learned friend* who has justly risen by ex-

* Mr. Kenyon, who was his colleague in the defence.

traordinary capacity and experience, to the highest rank in his profession, has spoken of with that distrust and diffidence, which becomes every Christian in a cause of blood. If he has such feelings, think what mine must be, who am a young man of little experience, unused to the bar of criminal courts, and sinking under the dreadful conviction of that inexperience. I have, however, this consolation, that no ignorance or inability on my part, can possibly prevent you from seeing, under the direction of the judges, that the crown has established no case of treason.

Gentlemen, I did expect, that the attorney general in opening a great and solemn state prosecution, would have at least indulged the advocates for the prisoner with his notions on the law of high treason, as applied to the case before you, in less general terms. It is very common indeed, in little civil actions, to make such obscure introductions by way of trap; but not so in cases where life is involved, because the right of the crown to conclude, even where no evidence is called by the prisoner, gives it the advantage of replying without having afforded scope for observations on the principles of the opening, with which the reply must be consistent.

One observation has, however, been made on the subject, in the truth of which I heartily concur, namely, that the crime of which the noble person at your bar stands accused, is certainly the very highest and most atrocious that a member of the community can possibly commit; because it is not, like all other crimes, merely an injury to society from the breach of some of its reciprocal relations, but is an attempt utterly to dissolve and destroy society altogether.

In nothing, therefore, is the wisdom and justice of our laws so strongly and eminently manifested, as in the rigid, accurate, cautious, explicit, unequivocal definition of what shall constitute this enormous offence. For high treason consisting, as I have said, in the breach and dissolution of that allegiance which binds society together, if it were left ambiguous, uncertain,

or undefined, all the other laws established for the personal safety of the subject, would be utterly useless; since this offence which, from its nature, is so capable of being created and judged of by rules of political expediency on the spur of the occasion, might be a rod at will to bruise the most virtuous members of the community, whenever that virtue should become troublesome or obnoxious to a bad government.

Injuries to the persons and properties of our neighbours, considered as individuals, the subjects of all other criminal prosecutions, are not only capable of greater precision, but the powers of the state can be very rarely interested in straining them beyond their legal interpretation. But if treason, where the government itself is directly offended, were left to the judgment of its ministers, without any boundaries, nay without the most distinct and inviolable boundaries marked out by law, there could be no publick freedom. The condition of an Englishman would then be no better than a slave's at the foot of a sultan, as there is little difference whether a man dies by the stroke of a sabre, without the forms of a trial, or by the most pompous ceremonies of justice, if the crime be made at pleasure by the state to fit the fact that is to be tried. Would to God, gentlemen of the jury, that this was a danger in theory alone, and that the pages of our history were not blotted with so many melancholy and disgraceful proofs of its truth! but these proofs, melancholy and disgraceful as they are, have become glorious monuments of the wisdom of our fathers, and ought to be a theme of rejoicing and emulation to us. For, from the mischiefs constantly arising to the state from every extension of treason, the law as it anciently stood, has been restored, and the constitution washed clean, though unhappily with the blood of oppressed and innocent men.

When I speak of the ancient law of treason, I mean the venerable statute of king Edward the third, on which the indictment you are now trying, is framed;

a statute made, as its preamble sets forth, for the more precise definition of this crime, which had not by the common law, been sufficiently explained. This statute consists of different and distinct *members*, the plain unextended letter of which was thought to be a sufficient protection to the person and honour of the sovereign, and an adequate security to the laws committed to his execution. I shall mention only two of these *members*, the others not being in the remotest degree applicable to the present accusation.

1st. *To compass, or imagine the death of the king.* This imagination, or purpose of the mind, visible only to its great author, the law requires to be *manifested* and *proved* by some *open act.* A provision so wise was obviously directed, not only to the security of the monarch's person, but to the stability of the government; his life being so interwoven with the constitution of the state, that an attempt to destroy the one, is justly held to be a rebellious conspiracy against the other.

2dly. *To levy war with him in the realm.* This is the crime charged in the indictment. Phraseology, so distinct as the words of the definition, it is hard to think could demand any explanation, or admit of any ambiguous construction among men who are willing to read laws according to the plain signification of language. Nevertheless, it has been an abundant source of that constructive cavil which this sacred and valuable act was made to prevent.

The real meaning of it, as it is bottomed in policy, reason, and justice; as it is ordained in plain unambiguous words; as it is confirmed by the precedents of justice, and illustrated by the writings of the great lights of the law, in different ages of our history, I shall, before I have done, impress upon your minds as a safe unerring standard, by which to measure the evidence you have heard. At present, I shall only say, that far and wide, as judicial decisions have in the loose manner you have heard, strained the construction of levying war beyond the warrant of the statute,

to the discontent of some of the greatest ornaments of the profession, they hurt not me. As a citizen I may disapprove of them, but as an advocate for the noble person at your bar, I need not impeach their authority; because none of them have gone further than this "that war may be levied against the king in his realm, not only by an insurrection to change, or to destroy the fundamental constitution of the government itself by rebellious war, but by the same war to endeavour to suppress the execution of the laws it has enacted, or to violate and overbear the protection they afford, not to individuals (which is a private wrong) but to any general class or description of the community by premeditated open acts of violence, hostility, and force."

Gentlemen, I repeat these words, and call solemnly on the judges to attend to what I say, and to contradict me if I mistake the law, "By *premeditated, open acts of violence, hostility, and force.*"

Gentlemen, this is not only the whole text, but, I submit it to the learned judges, under whose correction I am happy to speak, whether it be not an accurate explanation of the statute of treason, as far as it relates to the present subject, taken in its utmost extent of judicial construction, and which you cannot but see not only in its letter, but in its most strained signification, is confined to acts which immediately, openly, and unambiguously, strike at the very root and being of government, and not to any other offences, however injurious to its peace.

Such were the boundaries of high treason marked out in the reign of Edward the Third, and as often as the vices of bad princes, assisted by weak submissive parliaments, extended state offences beyond the strict letter of that act, as often the virtue of better princes and wiser parliaments brought them back again.

A long list of new treasons, which had grown up in the wretched reign of Richard the Second, from which, to use the language of the act that repealed them, "no man knew what to do or say for doubt

of the pains of death," were swept away in the first year of Henry the Fourth, his successour, and many more which had again sprung up and accumulated in the following distracted arbitrary reigns, putting tumults and riots on a footing with armed rebellion, were again levelled in the first year of queen Mary, and the statute of Edward once more made the standard of treasons. The security indeed of his present majesty's illustrious house from the machinations of those very papists who are now so highly in favour, has since that time added to the list; but these not being applicable to the present case, the ancient statute is still our only guide; which is so plain and simple in its object, so explicit and correct in its terms, as to leave no room for intrinsick errour; and the wisdom of its authors resolving that it should suffer from nothing extrinsick, shut the door against all extension of its plain letter; declaring in the very body of the act itself, that no offence out of that plain letter should be brought within the pale of treason by inference or construction; but that if any such cases happened, they should be referred to the parliament.

This wise restriction has been the subject of much just eulogium by all the most celebrated writers on the criminal law of England. Lord Coke says, that the parliament which made it was on that account called benedictum, or blessed. And the learned and virtuous judge Hale, a bitter enemy and opposer of constructive treasons, speaks of this sacred institution with that enthusiasm, which it cannot but inspire in the breast of every lover of the just privileges of mankind.

Gentlemen, in these mild days, when juries are so free, and judges so independent, perhaps all these observations might have been spared as unnecessary; but they can do no harm; and this history of treason, so honourable to England, cannot, even imperfectly as I have given it, be unpleasant to Englishmen. At all events, it cannot be thought an inapplicable introduction to my saying, that lord George Gordon,

who stands before you indicted for that crime, is not, cannot be guilty of it, unless he has levied war against the king in his realm, contrary to the plain letter, spirit, and intention of the act of the twenty fifth of Edward the Third; to be extended by no new or occasional constructions, to be strained by no fancied analogies, to be measured by no rules of political expediency, to be judged of by no theory, to be determined by the wisdom of no individual, however wise, but to be expounded by the simple genuine letter of the law.

Gentlemen, the only overt act charged in the indictment is the assembling the multitude, which we all of us remember went up with the petition of the Associated Protestants on the second of last June. In addressing myself to a humane and sensible jury of Englishmen sitting in judgment on the life of a fellow subject, more especially under the direction of a court so filled as this is, I trust I need not remind you, that the condition, purposes, and behaviour of that multitude, as originally assembled on that day, and the purposes and acts of him who assembled them, are the sole objects of investigation; and that all the dismal consequences which followed, and which naturally link themselves with this subject in the firmest minds must be altogether cut off, and abstracted from your attention further than the evidence warrants their admission. If the evidence had been coextensive with these consequences, if it had been proved that the same multitude, under the direction and with the concurrence of lord George Gordon, had afterwards attacked the bank, broke open the prisons, and set London in a conflagration, I should not now be addressing you. Do me the justice to believe, that I am neither so foolish as to imagine I could have defended him, nor so profligate as to wish it, if I could. But when it has appeared not only by the evidence in the cause, but by the evidence of the thing itself, by the issues of life which may be called the evidence of heaven, that these dreadful events were either entirely unconnected with the assembling of that mul-

titude to attend the petition of the protestants, or at the very worst, the unforeseen, undesigned, unabetted, and deeply regretted consequences of it, I confess the seriousness and solemnity of this trial sink and dwindle away. Only draw from your minds all that misfortune, accident, and the wickedness of others have brought upon the scene; and the cause requires no advocate. When I say that it requires no advocate, I mean that it requires no argument to screen it from the guilt of treason. For though I am perfectly convinced of the purity of my noble friend's intentions, yet I am not bound to defend the prudence of his conduct, nor to set it up as a pattern for imitation. We are not now, however, trying him for imprudence, for an indiscreet zeal, or for want of foresight and precaution, but for a deliberate and malicious predetermination to overpower the laws and government of his country by hostile rebellious force.

The indictment therefore first charges, that the multitude assembled on the second of June were armed and arrayed in a warlike manner, which indeed, if it had omitted to charge, we should not have troubled you with any defence at all, because no judgment could have been given on so defective an indictment. For the statute never meant to put an unarmed assembly of citizens on a footing with armed rebellion, and the crime, whatever it is, must always appear on the face of the record to warrant the judgment of the court.

It is indeed true, that it has been held to be matter of evidence and dependent on circumstances, what numbers or species of equipment and order, though not the regular equipment and order of soldiers, shall constitute an army so as to maintain the averment in the indictment of a warlike array; and likewise, what kinds of violence, though not pointed at the king's person, or the existence of the government, shall be construed to be war against the king. But as it has never yet been maintained in argument, in any court of the kingdom, or even speculated upon in theory, that a multitude without either weapons

offensive or defensive of any sort or kind, and yet not supplying the want of them by such acts of violence as multitudes sufficiently great can achieve without them; as it has never been asserted by the wildest adventurer in constructive treason, that such a multitude, armed with nothing, threatening nothing, and doing nothing, was an army levying war, I am entitled to say that the evidence does not support the first charge in the indictment, but that on the contrary it is manifestly false; and known to be such by thousands who saw on the second of June the peaceable demeanour of the Associated Protestants. But you will hear, no doubt, from the solicitor general, for they have saved all their intelligence for the reply, that fury supplies arms, *furor arma ministrat*, and the case of Damaree will, I suppose, be referred to, where the people assembled, had no banners or arms, but only clubs and bludgeons, yet the ringleader, that led them on to mischief, was adjudged to be guilty of high treason for levying war. This judgment it is not my purpose to impeach: for I have no time for digression to points that do not press upon me. I shall observe that in the case of Damaree, the mob, though not regularly armed, were provided with such weapons as best suited their mischievous designs. Their designs were open and avowed, and all the mischief was done that could have been done, if they had been in the compleatest armour. They burnt Dissenting meeting houses protected by law, and Damaree was taken at their head *in flagrante delicto*, with a torch in his hand, not only in the very act of destroying one of them, but leading on his followers, *in person*, to the *avowed* destruction of all the rest. There could therefore be no doubt of his purpose and intention, nor any great doubt that the perpetration of such purpose was from *its generality*, high treason, if perpetrated by such a force, as distinguishes a felonious riot from a treasonable levying of war. The principal doubt, therefore, in that case, was, whether such an unarmed riotous force constituted war within the

meaning of the statute; and on that point very learned men have differed; nor shall I attempt to decide between them. It is not necessary. We all coincide on a point of much more consequence to my noble friend. I mean, that in these cases, *it is the intention of assembling* that forms the guilt of treason. I shall give it to you in the words of a great legal character, the learned Foster, whose private opinions will no doubt be pressed upon you as doctrine and law, and which, if taken together, as all opinions ought, and not extracted in smuggling sentences to serve a shallow trick, I am contented to consider as authority.

This admirable judge, immediately after supporting the case of Damaree, as a levying war within the statute, against the opinion of Hale, in a similar case in the destruction of bawdy houses, which happened in his time, says: "*the true criterion therefore seems to be* quo animo—*did the parties assemble? With what intention did they meet?*"

On this issue then, by which I am supported by the whole body of the criminal law of England, concerning which there are no practical precedents of the courts that clash, nor even abstract opinions of the closet that differ, I come forth with boldness to meet the crown. For even supposing that the peaceable multitude, at the head of which was my noble client, though not hostily arrayed, though without one species of weapon among them, though assembled without plot or disguise by a publick advertisement, exhorting, nay commanding peace, and inviting the magistrates to be present to preserve it, if broken; though composed of thousands who are now standing around you, unimpeached and unreproved, yet who are all principals in treason, if such assembly were treason; supposing, I say, this multitude to be nevertheless an army within the statute, still the great question would remain behind, on which the guilt or innocence of the accused must singly depend, and which it is your exclusive province to determine, namely; whether they were assembled by my noble client for the traitorous purpose charged in the indict-

ment. For war must not only be levied, but it must be levied against the king in his realm, that is, either directly against his person to alter the constitution of the government, of which he is the head, or to suppress the laws, committed to his execution, by rebellious force. You must find that lord George Gordon assembled these men with that traitorous intention: you must find not merely a riotous illegal petitioning, not a tumultuous, indecent importunity to influence parliament, not the compulsion of motive from seeing so great a body of people united in sentiment and clamorous supplications, *but the absolute unequivocal compulsion of force* from the hostile acts of numbers united in rebellious conspiracy and arms.

This is the issue you are to try. For crimes of all denominations, consist wholly in the purpose of the human will producing the act. *Actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea.* The act does not constitute guilt; unless *the mind* participates. This is the great text from which the whole moral policy of penal justice is deduced. It stands at the top of the criminal page, through all the volumes of our humane and sensible laws. Lord chief justice Coke, whose chapter on this crime is the most authoritative and masterly of all his valuable works, ends indeed nearly, every sentence with an emphatical repetition of it.

It is necessary gentlemen, that the indictment should charge an open act, because the purpose of the mind, which is the object of trial, can only be known by actions; or, again, to use the words of Foster, who has ably and accurately expressed it, "the traitorous purpose, is the treason, the overt act, the means made use of to effectuate the intentions of the heart." But why should I borrow the language of Foster, or of any other man, when the language of the indictment itself is before our eyes. What does it say? Does it directly charge the overt act as in itself constituting the crime? No. It charges that the prisoner "maliciously and traitorously, did *compass, imagine, and intend to raise and levy war and rebellion against the king.*" This is the malice prepense of treason. It

charges further that to fulfil and bring to effect such traitorous compassings and intentions, he did, on the day mentioned in the indictment, actually assemble them, and levy war and rebellion against the king. Thus the law which is made to correct and punish the wickedness of the heart, and not the unconscious deeds of the body, goes up to the fountain of human agency, and arraigns the lurking mischief of the soul, dragging it to light by the evidence of open acts. The hostile mind is the crime, and, therefore, unless the matters which are in evidence before you, do, beyond all doubt or possibility of errour, convince you that the prisoner is a determined traitor in his heart, he is not guilty.

It is the same principle which creates all the various degrees of homicide, from that which is excusable, to the malignancy of murder. The fact is the same in all. The death of the man is the imputed crime, but the circumstance of intention makes all the difference. He who killed him is pronounced a murderer, a manslaughterer, or an unfortunate man, as the circumstances by which his mind is decyphered to the jury, shows it to have been cankered by dilibe. rate wickedness, or stirred up by sudden passions.

An immense multitude was beyond all doubt assembled on the second of June; but whether he that assembled them be guilty of high treason, of a high misdemeanor, or only of a breach of the act of king Charles the second, against the tumultuous petitioning, if such an act still exists,* depends wholly upon the evidence of his purpose in assembling them, to be gathered by you, and by you alone, from the whole tenor of his conduct; and to be collected not by inference or probability, or reasonable presumption, but in the words of the act, *provably;* that is, in the full unerring force of demonstration. You are called, upon your oaths to say, not whether lord George Gor-

* Lord Mansfield in his charge, told the jury expressly that the act was still in force.

don assembled the multitude in the place charged in the indictment, for that is not denied: but, whether it appeared by the facts produced in evidence for the crown, when confronted with the proofs which we have laid before you, that he assembled them in hostile array, and with a hostile mind, to take the laws into his own hands by main force, and to dissolve the constitution of the government, unless his petition should be listened to by parliament.

Gentlemen, this is your exclusive province to determine. The court can only tell you what acts the law in its general theory holds to be high treason, on the assumption, that such acts proceed from traitorous purposes: but they must leave it to your decision, and to your decision alone, whether the acts proved, appear in the present instance, under all the circumstances, to have arisen from the causes which form the essence of this high crime.

Gentlemen, you have now heard the law of treason; first in the abstract, and secondly as it applies to the general features of this case, which I have delivered with as much sincerity as if I had addressed you upon my oath from the bench where the judges sit. I declare to you solemnly, in the presence of that great Being, at whose bar we must all hereafter appear, that I have used no one art of an advocate, but have acted the plain unaffected part of a Christian, instructing the conscience of his fellow citizens to do justice.

If I have deceived you on the subject I am myself deceived. My ignorance too, is incurable; for I have spared no pains to understand it.

But, though I am not stiff in my opinions, before I change any one of those I have given you, I must see some direct instance of justice that contradicts them; and, as the law of England pays no respect to theories however ingenious, or to authors however wise, unless you hear me refuted by direct precedent, and not by vague doctrines, if you wish to sleep in peace, *follow me.*

Now, gentlemen, the most important part of our task begins; namely the application of the evi-

dence to the doctrines laid down. For as a trial is nothing more than the reference of facts to a certain rule of action, a long recapitulation of them would only serve to distract and perplex the memory, without enlightening the judgment, unless the great standard principle by which they are to be measured is fixed and rooted in the mind. When that is done, which I am confident has been done by you, every thing worthy of observation falls naturally into its place, and the result is safe and certain.

Gentlemen, it is already in proof before you, indeed it is now a matter of history, that an act of parliament passed in the session of 1778, for the repeal of certain restrictions which the policy of our ancestors had imposed upon the Roman Catholick religion, to prevent its extension, and to render its limited toleration harmless. These restrictions were imposed not because our ancestors took upon them to pronounce the Catholick faith to be offensive to God, but because it was incompatible with good faith to man, being utterly inconsistent with that allegiance which every subject owes to the government under which he lives, but from the obligations of which their religion gave them not only a release, but a crown of glory, for betraying.

It was, indeed, with astonishment that I heard the attorney general stigmatize those wise regulations of our patriot ancestors with the title of factious and cruel impositions on the consciences and liberties of their fellow citizens.

Gentlemen, they were *at that time* wise and salutary regulations; regulations to which this country owes its freedom and his majesty his crown; which I know my noble friend at the bar joins with me, and with all good men, in wishing that he and his posterity may wear forever.

Gentlemen, it is not my purpose to recall to your minds the fatal effects which Catholick bigotry has in former days produced in this island. I will not follow the example the crown has set me, by making an appeal to your passions. I will not call your attention

from those flames kindled by a villanous banditti, which the crown has thought fit in defiance of evidence to introduce, by bringing before your eyes the crueller flames, in which the bodies of our expiring, meek, patient, Christian fathers were little more than a century ago consuming in Smithfield. I will not call up from the graves of martyrs all the precious holy blood that has been spilt in this land to save its established government, and its reformed religion, from the secret villany and the open force of papists. The cause does not stand in need even of such honest arts, and I feel my heart too big voluntarily to recite such scenes, when I reflect that some of my own, and my best and dearest progenitors, from whom I glory to be sprung, ended their innocent lives in prisons and in exile, *only because they were protestants.*

Gentlemen, whether the great lights of science and of commerce, which since these disgraceful times have illuminated Europe, may by dispelling these shocking prejudices have rendered the papists of this day, as safe and trusty subjects as those who conform to the national religion established by law, I shall not take upon me to determine. It is wholly unconnected with the present inquiry. We are not trying a question either of divinity, or civil policy, and I shall therefore not enter at all into the motives, or merits of the act that produced the protestant petition to parliament. It was certainly introduced by persons that cannot be named by any good citizen without affection and respect. But this much I will say without fear of contradiction, that it was sudden and unexpected; that it passed with uncommon precipitation considering the magnitude of the object; that it underwent no discussion, and that the heads of the church, the constitutional guardians of the national religion, were never consulted upon it. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that many sincere protestants were alarmed. They had a right to be alarmed. It is the right and the *duty* of all the subjects of England to watch over their religious and civil liberties, and to approach either the senate or the throne

with their fears and their complaints. This is a privilege which has been bought with the dearest blood of our ancestors, and which is confirmed to us by law, as our ancient birth-right and inheritance.

Soon after the repeal of the act, the protestant association began, and from small beginnings, extended all over England and Scotland. A deed of association was signed to oppose by all legal means the growth of popery, and which of the advocates for the crown will stand up, and say, that such an union was illegal? Their union, I maintain, was perfectly constitutional; there was no obligation of secrecy, their transactions were all publick; a committee was appointed for regularity and correspondence; and circular letters were sent to all the dignitaries of the church to join with them in the protection of the national religion.

Gentlemen, all this happened before lord George Gordon was a member of, or the most distantly connected with it: for, it was not till November, 1779, that the London association made him an offer of their chair, by a unanimous resolution communicated to him, unsought and unexpected, in a publick letter signed by the secretary in the name of the whole body, and from that day, to the day he was committed to the tower, I will lead him by the hand in your view, that you may see there is no blame in him. Even though all his behaviour was unreserved and publick, and though watched by wicked men for purposes of vengeance, the crown has totally failed in giving it such a context, as can justify, in the mind of any reasonable man, the conclusion of guilt. This will fully appear hereafter. But let us now attend to the evidence on the part of the crown.

The first witness called to support this prosecution is William Hay, who acknowledged himself to be a a bankrupt in fortune, and who, I am afraid, is a bankrupt also in conscience. Such a scene of impudent, ridiculous inconsistency as he exhibited would have utterly destroyed his credibility in the most trifling civil suit. I am therefore almost ashamed to remind you of

his evidence, when I reflect that you will never suffer it to glance across your minds on this solemn occasion.

This man, whom I may now, without offence or slander, point out to you as a dark popish spy, who attended the meetings of the London association, to pervert harmless purposes, conscious that the discovery of his character would invalidate all his testimony, endeavoured at first to conceal the activity of his zeal by denying that he had seen any of the destructive scenes imputed to the protestants, yet almost in the same breath it came out, that there was hardly a place, publick or private, where riot had erected her standard, in which he had not been; nor a house, prison, or chapel, that was destroyed, to the demolition of which he had not been a witness. He was at Newgate, and the Fleet, at Langdale's, and at Coleman-street, at the Sardinian ambassadour's, and in Great Queen street, Lincoln's-Inn-fields. What took him to Coachmaker's Hall? He went thither as he told us, to watch their proceedings. For he expected no good from them; and to justify his prophecy of evil, he said, on his examination by the crown, that as early as December, he had heard some alarming republican language. What expressions did he remember? Why, that the lord advocate of Scotland was called only Harry Dundas. Finding this too ridiculous for so grave an occasion, he endeavoured to put some words about the breach of the king's coronation oath into the prisoner's mouth, which it is notorious he read out of an old Scotch book, published near a century ago, on the abdication of king James the second. Only attend now, gentlemen, to his cross examination. He was sure he had seen lord George Gordon at Greenwood's room in January; but when Mr. Kenyon, who knew he had never been there, advised him to recollect himself, he desired to consult his notes.

First, he is positively sure, from his memory, that he had seen him there; then, he says, he cannot trust his memory without referring to his papers. On looking at them, they contradict him; and he then

confesses that he never saw lord George Gordon at Greenwood's room in January, or at any other time. But why did he take notes? He said it was, because he foresaw what would happen. How fortunate the crown is, gentlemen, to have such friends to collect evidence by anticipation. When did he begin to take notes? He said on the 21st of February, which was the first time he was alarmed at what he had seen and heard, although not a minute before he had been reading a note taken at Greenwood's room in January, and had sworn that he attended their meetings from apprehensions of consequences as early as December.

Mr. Kenyon, who now saw him bewildered in a maze of falsehood, and suspecting his notes to have been a villanous fabrication to give the show of correctness to his evidence, attacked him with a shrewdness for which he was wholly unprepared. You remember the witness had declared, that he always took notes when he attended any meetings where he expected their deliberations might be followed with dangerous consequences. Says Mr. Kenyon, "give me one instance in the whole course of your life, where you ever took notes before." Poor Mr. Hay was thunderstruck; the sweat ran down his face, and his countenance bespoke despair, not recollection. "Sir, repeated Mr. Kenyon, I must have an instance; tell me when and where." Gentlemen, it was now too late. Some instance he was obliged to give, and as it was evident to every body, that he had one still to choose, I think he might have selected a better. He had taken notes at the general assembly of the church of Scotland, six and twenty years before. What! did he apprehend dangerous consequences from the deliberations of the grave elders of Kirk? Were they levying war against the king? At last, when he is called upon to say to whom he communicated the intelligence he had collected, the spy stood confessed indeed. At first, he refused to tell, saying he was his friend, and that he was not obliged to give him up. But when forced finally to speak, it came out to be Mr. Butler, a gentle-

man universally known, and who, from what I know of him, or any other spy, because he is a man every way respectable, but who certainly is not only a papist, but the person who was employed, in all their proceedings, to obtain the late indulgences from parliament. He called Mr. Butler his particular friend, yet professed himself ignorant of his religion. I am sure he could not have been desired to conceal it. Mr. Butler makes no secret of his religion. It is no reproach to any man to live the life he does. But Mr. Hay thought it of moment to his credit in the cause that he himself might be thought a protestant, unconnected with papists, and not a popish spy. So ambitious was Mr. Hay, of being useful in his new office, that after staying a little in St. George's fields, he ran home to his own house in St. Dunstan's Church yard, and got upon the leads, where he says he saw the very same man, carrying the very same flag he had seen in the fields. Gentlemen, whether the petitioners employed the identical standard man through the whole course of their peaceable procession is certainly totally immaterial to the cause, but the circumstance is material to show the wickedness of Hay. "How," says Mr. Kenyon, "do you know that it was the same person you saw in the fields? Was you acquainted with him?" No. How then? Why he looked like a brewer's servant. *Like a brewer's servant!* "What, were they not all in their Sunday's clothes? Was the man with the flag alone in the dress of his trade? No. Then how do you know he was a brewer's servant?"—Poor Mr. Hay! nothing but sweat and confusion again. At last, after a hesitation, which every body thought would have ended in his running out of court, he said he knew him to be a brewer's servant, because there was something particular in the cut of his coat, the cut of his breeches, and the cut of his stockings.

You see by what strange means villany is detected. Perhaps he might have escaped from me, but he sunk under that shrewdness and sagacity, which ability, without long habits, does not provide. Gentle-

men, you will not, I am sure, forget, whenever you see a man, about whose apparel there is any thing particular, to set him down for a brewer's servant.

Mr. Hay afterwards went to the lobby of the house of commons. What took him there?——He thought himself in danger; and therefore, says Mr. Kenyon, "you thrust yourself voluntarily into the very centre of danger." *That explanation not doing*——Then he had a particular friend, whom he knew to be in the lobby, and whom he apprehended to be in danger.——"Sir," said Mr. Kenyon, "who was that particular friend? out with it! give us his name instantly!" All in confusion again. Not a word to say for himself; and the name of this person, who had the honour of Mr. Hay's friendship, will probably remain a secret forever. It may be asked, how are these circumstances material? The answer is obvious: they are material—because when you see a witness running into every hole and corner of falsehood, and as fast as he is made to bolt out of one, taking cover in another, you will never give credit to what that man relates, as to points which are to affect the life or reputation of a fellow citizen accused before you. I am sure you will not, and I might, therefore, get rid of this wretch altogether, without making a single remark on that part of his testimony which bears upon the issue you are trying. But the crown shall have the full benefit of it all. I will defraud it of nothing he has said, notwithstanding all his bankruptcy of fortune, and conscience, and all his folly and wickedness. Let us for the present take it as true, and see what it amounts to. What does he state to have passed at Coachmakers Hall? That lord George Gordon desired the multitude to behave with unanimity and firmness, as the Scotch had done. Gentlemen, there is no manner of doubt that the Scotch behaved with unanimity and firmness, in resisting the relaxation of the penal laws against papists, and that by such conduct they succeeded. But, it was by the constitutional unanimity and firmness of the great body of the people of Scotland,

whose example lord George Gordon recommended, and not by the riots and burning which were attempted to be proved had been committed in Edinburgh.

I can tell you, myself, gentlemen, as one of the people of Scotland, that there then existed, and still exists, eighty-five societies of protestants, who have been, and still are, uniformly firm in opposing every change in the system of laws established to secure the revolution, and, that parliament gave way in Scotland to their united voice, not to the firebrands of the rabble. It is the duty of parliament to listen to the voice of the people, for they are the servants of the people. And when the constitution of church or state is unanimously believed, whether truly or falsely, to be in danger, I hope there never will be wanting men, notwithstanding the proceedings of to-day, to desire the people to persevere, and be firm. Has, Gentlemen, the crown, proved that the Protestant Association fired the mass-houses in Scotland, or, acted in rebellious opposition to law, so as to entitle it to wrest the prisoner's expressions into an excitation of rebellion against the state, or of violence against the property of papists here, by setting up their firmness as an example? Certainly not. It has not even proved the naked fact of such violences having been committed. But, if it had, such proof would have called for no resistance, since to make them bear as rebellious advice to the Protestant Association of London, it must have been first shown that such acts had been perpetrated or encouraged by the protestant societies in the north.

Who has dared to say this? No one. The rabble in Scotland certainly did that which has since been done by the rabble in England, to the disgrace and reproach of both countries; but in neither country was there found one man of character or condition, of any description, who abetted such enormities, nor any man, high, or low, of any of the associated protestants here or there, who was either convicted, tried, or taken on suspicion.

As to what Mr. Hay heard, on the 29th of May, it was nothing more than the proposition of going up in a body to St. George's fields, to consider how the petition should be presented, with the same exhortations to firmness as before. The resolution agreed to on the motion has been read, and when I come to state the evidence on the part of my noble friend, I will show you the impossibility of supporting any criminal inference from what Mr. Hay afterwards puts into his mouth in the lobby, even taking it to be true. I wish here to be accurate. * He says: "lord George desired them to continue stedfastly to adhere to so good a cause as their's was; promised to persevere in it himself, and hoped, though there was little expectation at present from the house of commons, that they would meet with redress from their mild and gracious sovereign, who no doubt, would recommend it to his ministers to repeal the bill." This was all he heard. Gentlemen, is this the language of rebellion? If a multitude were at the gates of the house of commons to command and insist on a repeal of this law, why encourage their hopes, by reminding them that they had a mild and gracious sovereign? If war was levying against the monarch, there was no occasion for his mildness and graciousness. If the prisoner had said, be firm and persevere, we shall meet with redress from the prudence of the sovereign, it might have born a different construction, because, whether he was gracious or severe, his prudence might lead him to submit to the necessity of the times. The words sworn to are, therefore, perfectly clear and obvious. Persevere in your zeal and supplications, and you will meet with redress from a mild and gracious king, who will recommend it to his ministers to repeal the bill. Good God! if they were to wait till the king, whether from benevolence or fear, should direct his ministers to influence the proceedings of parliament, how does it square with the charge of instant coercion or intimidation of the house of commons? If the multi-

* Refers to his notes.

tude were assembled with the premeditated design of producing the immediate repeal by terrour or arms, is it possible to suppose that their leader would desire them to be quiet, and refer them to those qualities of the prince, which, however eminently they belonged to him, never could be exerted on subjects in rebellion to his authority? Into what a labyrinth of nonsense and contradiction men involve themselves, when forsaking the rigid rules of evidence, in *cases of blood*, they would draw conclusions in contradiction to language, and in defiance of common sense!

The next witness that was called by the crown is Mr. Medcalf. He was not in the lobby, but speaks only of Coachmakers Hall on the 29th of May, and to St. George's fields. He says, that at the former, Lord George reminded the crowd, that the Scotch had succeeded by their unanimity; and hoped that no one who had signed the petition would be ashamed or afraid to show himself in the cause. That he was ready to go to the gallows for it. That he would not present the petition of a lukewarm people; and desired them to come to St. George's-Fields, distinguished with blue cockades, and that they should be marshaled in four divisions. Then he speaks of seeing them in the fields, in the order which had been prescribed; that he saw lord George Gordon there in a coach, surrounded with a vast concourse of people, with blue ribbons, forming like soldiers, but was not near enough to hear whether the prisoner spoke to them or not. Such is Mr. Medcalf's evidence, and after the attention you have honoured me with, and which I shall have occasion so often to ask again, I shall trouble you with but one observation, namely, that it cannot, without absurdity, be supposed, that if the assembly at Coachmakers Hall, had been such conspirators as they are represented, their doors would have been open to strangers, like this witness, to come in to report their proceedings.

The next witness is Mr. Anstruther, who speaks of the language and deportment of the noble prisoner,

both at Coachmakers Hall on the 29th of May and afterwards, on the second of June, in the lobby of the house of commons. It will be granted to me, I am sure, even by the advocates of the crown, that this gentleman, not only from the clearness and consistency of his testimony, but from his rank and character in the world, is infinitely more worthy of credit than Mr. Hay who went before him; and from the circumstances of irritation and confusion under which the reverend Mr. Bowen confessed himself to have heard and seen what he told you he heard and saw, I may likewise assert, without any offence to the reverend gentlemen, and without drawing any parallel between their credits, that where their accounts of this transaction differ, the preference is due to the former. Mr. Anstruther very properly prefaced his evidence with this declaration: "*I do not mean to speak accurately to words, it being impossible to recollect them at this distance of time.*" I believe I have used his very expression, and such expression it well became him to use in a *case of blood.* Words, even if they could be accurately remembered, are to be admitted with great reserve and caution, when the purpose of the speaker is to be measured by them. They are transient and fleeting; frequently the effect of a sudden transport, easily misunderstood, and often unconsciously misrepresented. It may be the fate of the most innocent language to appear ambiguous, or even malignant, when related in mutilated detached passages, by people to whom it was not addressed, and who knew nothing of the previous design, either of the speaker, or of those to whom he spoke. Mr. Anstruther says, that he heard lord George Gordon desire the petitioners to meet him on the Friday following in St. George's fields, and that if there were fewer than twenty thousand people, he would not present the petition, as it would not be of consequence enough, and that he recommended to them the example of the Scotch, who, by their firmness, had carried their point.

Gentlemen, I have already admitted that they did by firmness carry it. But has Mr. Anstruther attempted to state any one expression that fell from the prisoner, to justify the positive unerring conclusion, or even the presumption, that the firmness of the Scotch protestants, by which the point was carried in Scotland, was the resistance and riots of the rabble? No, gentlemen, he singly states the words, as he heard them in the hall, on the 29th, and all that he afterwards speaks of in the lobby rebuts so harsh and dangerous a construction. The words sworn to, at Coachmakers Hall are, "that he recommended temperance and firmness." Gentlemen, if the prisoner's motives are to be judged by words, for heaven's sake let these words carry their popular meaning. Is it to be presumed, without proof, that a man means one thing, because he says another? Does the exhortation of temperance and firmness apply most naturally to the constitutional resistance of the protestants of Scotland, or to the outrages of ruffians who pulled down the houses of their neighbours? Is it possible, with decency, to say in a court of justice, that the recommendation of temperance is the excitation of villany and phrensy? Gentlemen, is it in evidence before you that by rebellion the Scotch carried their point; or that the indulgences to papists were not extended to Scotland, because the rabble had opposed their extension? Has the crown authorized either the court, or its law servants, to tell you so? Or can it be decently maintained, that parliament was so infamous or so weak as to yield to a wretched mob of vagabonds at Edinburgh, what it has since refused to the earnest prayers of an hundred thousand protestants in London? No, gentlemen of the jury, parliament was not, I hope, so abandoned. The ministers knew that this law was abhorrent to the protestants in Scotland, and though they never held out resistance, if government should be disposed to cram it down their throats by force, such a violence to the united sentiments of the people, appeared to be a measure so obnoxious, so dangerous, and withal so unreasona-

ble, that it was wisely and judiciously dropped to satisfy the general wishes of the nation, and not to avert the vengeance of those low incendiaries, whose misdeeds have rather been talked of than proved.

Thus, gentlemen, the exculpation of lord George's conduct on the 29th of May, is sufficiently established by the very evidence on which the crown asks you to convict him. For, in recommending temperance and firmness after the example of Scotland, you cannot be justified in pronouncing, that he meant more than the firmness of the grave and respectable people in that country, to which the legislature yielded, instead of branding it with the title of rebellion.

Such, gentlemen, is the whole amount of all my noble friend's previous communication with the petitioners, whom he afterwards assembled to consider how their petition should be presented. This is all, not only that men of credit can tell you on the part of the prosecution, but all that even the worst vagabond that ever appeared in a court, the very scum of the earth, thought himself safe in saying, upon oath, on the present occasion. Indeed, gentlemen, when I consider my noble friend's situation, his open, unreserved temper, and his warm and animated zeal for a cause which rendered him obnoxious to so many wicked men; speaking daily and publickly to mixed multitudes of friends and foes on a subject which affected his passions, I confess, I am astonished that no other expressions, than those in evidence before you, have found their way into this court. That they have not found their way is surely a most satisfactory proof, that there was nothing in his heart, which even youthful zeal could magnify into guilt, or want of caution betray.

Gentlemen, Mr. Anstruther's evidence, when he speaks of the lobby of the house of commons, deserves our attention. He says, "I saw lord George leaning over the gallery," which position, joined with what he mentioned of his talking with the chaplain, marks the time, and casts a strong doubt on Bowen's testimony, which you will find stands, in

this only material part of it, single and unsupported. "I then heard him," continues Mr. Anstruther, "tell them they had been called a mob, in the house, and that peace officers had been sent to disperse them, *peaceable* petitioners: but that by steadiness and firmness they might carry their point; as he had no doubt his majesty, who was a *gracious* prince, would send to his ministers to repeal the act, when he heard his subjects were coming up for miles round, and *wishing* its repeal." How coming up? In rebellion and arms to compel it? No! All is still put on the *graciousness* of the sovereign, in listening to the unanimous wishes of his people. If the multitude then assembled had been brought together to intimidate the house by their firmness, or to coerce it by their numbers, it was ridiculous to look forward to the king's influence over it, when the collection of future multitudes should induce him to employ it. The expressions were therefore quite obvious, nor could malice itself have suggested another construction to them, were it not for the fact, that the house was at that time surrounded, not by the petitioners, whom the noble prisoner had assembled, but by a mob who had mixed with them, and who therefore, when addressed by him, were instantly set down as his followers. He thought he was speaking to the sober members of the association, who by steadiness and perseverance, could understand nothing more than a continuance in that conduct he had antecedently prescribed. For steadiness signifies a uniformity, not a change of conduct, and I defy the crown to find out a single expression, from the day he took the chair of the association, to the day I am speaking of, that justifies any other construction of steadiness and firmness than that which I put upon it before.

What would be the feelings of our venerable ancestors, who framed the statute of treasons to prevent their children being drawn into the snares of death, unless provably convicted by overt acts, if they could hear us disputing whether it was treason to desire

harmless unarmed men to be firm and of good heart, and to trust to the graciousness of their king?

Here Mr. Anstruther closes his evidence, which leads me to Mr. Bowen, who is the only man, I beseech you, gentlemen of the jury, to attend to this circumstance, that has attempted directly or indirectly, to say that lord George Gordon uttered a syllable to the multitude in the lobby, concerning the destruction of the mass-houses in Scotland: not one of the crown witnesses, not even the wretched abandoned Hay, who was kept, as he declared, in the lobby the whole afternoon, from anxiety for his pretended friend, has ever glanced at any expression resembling it. They all finish with the expectation which was held out from a mild and *gracious* sovereign. Mr. Bowen alone goes on further, and speaks of the successful riots of the Scotch, but speaks of them in such a manner, as so far from conveying the hostile idea which he seemed sufficiently desirous to impress, tends directly to wipe off the dark hints and insinuations that have been made to supply the place of proof upon that subject, which should not at all have been touched on without the fullest support of evidence, and where nothing but the most unequivocal evidence ought to have been received. He says his lordship began by bidding them be *quiet, peaceable and steady. Not steady alone;* though if that had been the expression, singly by itself, I should not be afraid to meet it. But be quiet, peaceable, and steady, were the words employed. Gentlemen, I am indifferent what other expressions of dubious interpretation are mixed with these. For you are trying whether my noble friend came to the house of commons with a decidedly hostile mind; and as I shall, on the recapitulation of our own evidence, trace him in your recollection without spot or stain, down to the very moment when the imputed words were spoken, you will hardly forsake the innocent context of behaviour, and torture his intentions to collect the blackest system of guilt, starting up in a moment, without being previously concerted, or being afterwards carried into execution.

First, what are the words by which you are to be convinced that the legislature was to be frightened into compliance, or to be coerced if terrour should fail? "Be quiet, *peaceable*, and steady; you are a good people; you have a good cause. His majesty is a *gracious* monarch, and when he hears that all his people, ten miles round, are collecting, he will send to his ministers to repeal the act." God of heaven, gentlemen, by what rules of construction can such an address to unarmed, defenceless men, be tortured into treasonable guilt? It is impossible to do it without pronouncing, even in the total absence of all proof of fraud or deceit in the speaker, that *quiet* signifies tumult and uproar, and that *peace* signifies war and rebellion.

Gentlemen, I before observed, that it was most important for you to remember, that with this exhortation to quiet, and confidence in the king, the evidence of the other witnesses closed. Even Mr. Anstruther, who was a long time afterwards in the lobby heard nothing further; so that if Mr. Bowen had been out of the case altogether, what would the amount be? Why simply, that lord George Gordon having assembled an unarmed, inoffensive multitude in St. George's fields, to present a petition to parliament, and finding them becoming tumultuous at the discontent of the members, and the discredit of the cause, desired them not to give it up, but to continue to show their zeal for the legal object in which they were engaged, and to manifest that zeal quietly and peaceably, and not to despair of success; since, though the house were not disposed to listen to it, they had a *gracious* sovereign who would. This is the sum and substance of the whole. They were not even by any one ambigious expression encouraged to trust to their numbers as sufficient to overawe the house, or to their strength to compel it, nor to the prudence of the state in yielding to necessity, but to the indulgence of the king, in compliance with the wishes of his people. Mr. Bowen, however, thought proper to proceed; and I beg that you will particu-

larly attend to the sequel of his evidence. He stands single, in all the rest he says, which might entitle me to ask you absolutely to reject it; but I have no objection to your believing every word of it if you can, because, if inconsistencies prove any thing, they prove, that there is nothing of that deliberation which constitutes guilt. I mean to be correct as to his words.* He says, "that lord George told the people that an attempt had been made to introduce the bill into Scotland, and that they had no redress till the mass houses were pulled down. That lord Weymouth then sent official assurances that it should not be extended to them." Gentlemen, why is Mr. Bowen called by the crown to tell you this? The reason is plain, because the crown, conscious that it could make no case of treason from the rest of the evidence in the sober judgment of law; aware that it had proved no purpose or act of force against the house of commons, to give countenance to the accusation, much less to warrant a conviction, found it necessary to hold up the noble prisoner, as the wicked and cruel author of all those calamities, in which every man's passions might be supposed to come in to assist his judgment to decide. They therefore made him speak in enigmas to the multitude; not telling them to do mischief in order to succeed, but that by mischief in Scotland success had been obtained. But were the mischiefs themselves that did happen here of a sort that warranted such a conclusion? Can any man living for instance believe that lord George Gordon could possibly have excited the mob to destroy the house of that great and venerable magistrate who has presided so long in this high tribunal, that the oldest of us do not remember him in any other character than the awful form and figure of justice? This magistrate, who had always been the friend of the protestant dissenters, against the ill-timed jealousies of establishment, who, moreover, was his countryman, and without adverting to the partiality not unjustly imputed to the Scotch, a

* Refers to his notes.

man of whom any country might be proud, as combining with talents and station the most illustrious, virtues, pure, bright, and exemplary. No, gentlemen, it is not credible, that any man of noble birth, and liberal education, unless agitated by implacable personal resentment, could possibly consent to the burning the house of lord Mansfield. Even if Mr. Bowen therefore had ended here, I can hardly conceive such a construction could be decently hazarded after all the witnesses we have called. How much less when after the dark insinuations which such expressions might otherwise have been argued to convey, the very same witness, on whose testimony alone they are to be believed, and who must be credited or discredited *in toto*, takes out the sting himself, by giving them such an immediate context and conclusion as renders the proposition ridiculous, which his evidence is brought forward to establish? For he says, that lord George Gordon, instantly afterwards addressed himself thus: "Beware of evil minded persons who may mix among you and do mischief, the blame of which will be imputed to you." Gentlemen, if you reflect on the slander which I told you fell upon the protestants in Scotland by the acts of the rabble there, I am sure you will think the words are capable of an easy explanation. But as Mr. Bowen concluded with telling you, that he heard them in the midst of noise and confusion, and as I can only take them from him, I shall not make an attempt to collect them into one consistent discourse, so as to give them a decided meaning in favour of my client, because I have repeatedly told you, that words imperfectly heard, and partially related, cannot be so reconciled. But this I will say, that he must be a ruffian and not a lawyer, who would dare to tell an English jury that such ambiguous words, hemmed closely in between others not only innocent, but meritorious, are to be adopted to constitute guilt, by rejecting both introduction and sequel, with which they are absolutely irreconcilable, and inconsistent. For if ambiguous words, when coupled with actions, decypher the mind of the actor,

so as to establish the presumption of guilt, will not such as are plainly innocent and distinct go as far to repel such presumption? Is innocence more difficult of proof than the most malignant wickedness? Gentmen, I see your minds revolt at such shocking propositions. I beseech you to forgive me. I am afraid that my zeal for my client has led me to offer observations which I ought in justice to have believed, that every honest mind would feel the truth of with pain and abhorrence, without being pointed out.

Gentlemen, I now come properly to the evidence on the part of the prisoner.

I before told you that it was not till November, 1779, when the Protestant Association was already fully established, that lord George Gordon was elected president by the unanimous voice of the whole body, unlooked for and unsolicited. It is surely not an immaterial circumstance, that at the very first meeting where his lordship presided, a dutiful and respectful petition, the same which was afterwards presented to parliament, was read and approved; one, which so far from containing any thing threatening or offensive, conveys not a very oblique reflection upon the behaviour of the people in Scotland. It states, that as England and that country were now one, and as official assurances had been given that the law should not pass there, they hoped the peaceable and constitutional deportment of the English protestants would entitle them to the approbation of parliament.

It appears by the evidence of Mr. Erasmus Middleton, a very respectable clergyman, and one of the committee of the association, that a meeting had been held on the 4th of May, at which Lord George was not present. That at this meeting a motion had been made for going up with the petition in a body, but which not being regularly put from the chair, no resolution was taken upon it, and that it was likewise agreed on, but in the same irregular manner, that there should be no other publick meeting, previous to the presenting of the petition. That this last resolu-

tion gave great discontent, and that lord George Gordon was applied to by a large and respectable number of the association to call another, to consider of the most prudent and respectful method of presenting their petition. That before he complied with their request, he consulted with the committee on the propriety of complying, who all agreeing to it, except the secretary, and that his lordship advertised the meeting, which was afterwards held on the 29th of May. The meeting was therefore the act of the whole association. As to the original difference between my noble friend and the committee, on the expediency of the measure, it is totally immaterial; since Mr. Middleton, who was one of the number who differed with him on that subject, and whose evidence is therefore infinitely more to be relied on, told you, that his whole deportment was so clear and unequivocal, as entitled him to declare, on his most solemn oath, that he in his conscience believed that his views were perfectly constitutional and pure. That he attended all the previous meetings of the society, from the day he became president to the day in question; and that knowing they were objects of much jealousy and malice, he watched his behaviour with anxiety, lest his zeal should furnish matter for misrepresentation, but that he never heard an expression escape him, which marked a disposition to violate the duty and subordination of a subject, or which could lead any man to believe that his objects were different from the avowed and legal objects of the association.

Gentlemen, we could have examined thousands to the same fact, for as I told you when I began to speak, I was obliged to leave my place to disencumber myself from their names. And now, that I am to remind you of Mr. Middleton's evidence, as to the 29th of May, you will see how dangerous and unjust it is, for men, however perfect their memories, or however great their veracity, to come into a criminal court retailing scraps of sentences which they heard by thrusting themselves, from curiosity, into places where their business did not lead them;

ignorant of the views and tempers of both speakers, and hearers, learning only a part, and perhaps innocently misrepresenting that part, from not having heard the whole.

The witnesses for the crown all tell you, that lord George Gordon declared he would not go up with the petition, unless he was attended by twenty thousand people who had signed it; and here they think proper to stop as if he had said nothing further, leaving you to remark to yourselves—what possible purpose could he have in assembling such a multitude on the very day the house was to receive the petition? Why should he urge it when the committee had before thought it inexpedient? And why should he refuse to present it unless he was so attended? Hear what Mr. Middleton states. He tells you that my noble friend informed the petitioners, that if it were decided they were not to attend, to consider how the petition should be presented: he would with the greatest pleasure go up with it alone, but that if it were resolved that they should attend it in person, he expected twenty thousand at the least would meet him in St. George's-fields, for that otherwise the petition would be considered as a forgery. That it had often been suggested in the house and elsewhere, that the repeal of the bill was not the serious wish of the people at large. That the petition was a list of names on parchment, and not of men in sentiment. That the same objections had been made to many other petitions, and assigned as the cause of their rejection; and that he was therefore anxious to show parliament what, and how many were actually interested in its success, which he thought, and reasonably thought, would be a strong inducement to the house to listen to it. Therefore says he, I wish them to see who and what you are. Dress yourselves in your best clothes, which Mr. Hay, who I suppose, had been reading the indictment, thought it would be better to say, array yourselves. He desired that not a stick should be seen among them; that if any man insulted another, or was guilty of any breach of

the peace, he was to be given up to the magistrates. Mr. Attorney General, to persuade you that this was all colour and deceit, observes: "How was a magistrate to face forty thousand men? How were offenders in such a multitude to be amenable to the civil power?" Why what a shameful perversion of a plain, peaceable purpose! To be sure if the multitude had been assembled to resist the magistrate, offenders could not be secured. But they themselves were ordered to apprehend all offenders amongst them, and to deliver them up to justice. They themselves were to surrender their fellows to civil authority if they offended. But it seems that lord George ought to have foreseen that so great a multitude could not be collected without mischief. Gentlemen, we are not trying whether he might or ought to have foreseen mischief, but whether he wickedly and traitorously preconcerted and designed it. But if he be an object of censure for not foreseeing it, what shall we say to government that took no step to prevent it, that issued no proclamation warning the people of the danger and illegality of such an assembly. If a peaceable multitude with a petition in their hands, be an army, and if the noise and confusion, inseparable from numbers, though without violence or the purpose of violence, constitute war, what shall be said of that government which remained from Tuesday to Friday, knowing that an army was collecting to levy war by publick advertisement, yet had not a single soldier, no, not even a constable to protect the state.

Gentlemen, I come forth to do that for government which its own servant, the attorney general, has not done. I come forth to rescue it from the infamy with which such a conduct would justly load it, if the language its advocate has held this day was to be believed. But government has an unanswerable defence. It neither did nor could possibly enter into the head of any man in authority to prophesy, human wisdom could not divine, that wicked and desperate men, taking advantage of the occasion which perhaps an

imprudent zeal for religion had produced, would dishonour the cause of all religion by the disgraceful acts that followed.

Why then is it to be said, that lord George Gordon is a traitor, who without proof of any hostile purpose to the government of his country, only did not foresee that which nobody else foresaw, which those people whose business it is to foresee every danger that threatens the state, and to avert it by the interference of magistracy, though they could not but read the advertisement, neither did, nor could possibly apprehend.

How are these observations attempted to be answered? only by asserting without evidence, or even reasonable argument, that all this was colour and deceit. Gentlemen, I again say, that it is scandalous and reproachful, and not to be justified by any one duty that can belong to an advocate at the bar, in an English court of justice, in a *case of blood*, to declaim without any proof or attempt of proof, that all a man's expressions, however peaceable, however quiet, however constitutional, however loyal, are all fraud and villany. Look, gentlemen, to the issues of life, which I before called the evidence of heaven. I call them so still, and I may truly call them so, when out of a book compiled by the crown from the petition in the house of commons, containing the names of all who signed it, and which they printed in order to prevent any of that number from being summoned upon the jury to try this indictment, not one criminal, or even suspected, name is to be found.

After this, gentlemen, I think they ought in decency to have been silent. I see the effect it has upon you, and I know I am warranted in my assertion of the fact. If I am not, why did they not produce the record of some convictions, and compare it with the list? I thank them for the present, which, though they did not produce, they cannot stand up and deny.

"O that mine enemy had written a book," was the memorable exclamation of the persecuted Job. But,

I may exultingly exclaim—my adversary has written a book!

What is the evidence then on which the connexion of my noble client with the outrages of the mob is to be proved? Why that they had blue cockades. How absurd! Is he answerable for every man that wears a blue cockade. If a person commits murder in my livery, without my command, council, or consent, is the murder mine?

In all cumulative constructive treasons, gentlemen, you are to judge from the tenour of a man's behaviour not from crooked and disjointed parts of it. *Nemo repente est turpissimus.* No one can possibly be guilty of this crime by a sudden impulse of the mind; lord George Gordon stands, therefore, upon the evidence at Coachmakers Hall as pure and white as snow. He stands so upon the evidence of a man who had differed with him as to the expediency of his conduct, yet who swears that, from the time he took the chair till the time which is the subject of inquiry, there was no blame in him.

You, therefore, are bound as Christian men to believe that when he came to St. George's fields on the memorable morning, he had no hostile intention of repealing a law by rebellion.

But it seems all his behaviour at Coachmakers Hall was colour and deceit. Let us see, therefore, whether this body of men when assembled answered the description of that which I have stated to be the purpose of him who assembled them. Were they a multitude arrayed for terrour and force? On the contrary you have heard, upon the evidence of men whose veracity is not to be impeached, that they were sober, decent, quit, peaceable tradesmen, of the better sort, well dressed and well behaved; and that there was not a man among them who had any one weapon offensive or defensive. Sir Philip Jennings Clerke tells you, he went into the fields; that he drove through them, talked to many individuals amongst them, who all informed him it was not their wish to persecute the Papists, but that they were alarmed for the fate of their

religion. He further told you he never saw a more peaceable multitude, and it appears upon the oath of all who were present, that lord George Gordon went among the crowd exhorting them to peace and quiet.

Mark his conduct, gentlemen, when he heard from Mr. Evans that there was a low riotous set of people assembled in Palace Yard. Mr. Evans, being a member of the Protestant Association, and desirous that nothing tumultuary might happen from the assembly, went in his carriage with Mr. Spinage to St. George's fields to inform lord George that there were such people assembled, probably Papists, who were determined to do mischief. The moment he told him of it, whatever his original plan might have been, he instantly changed it on seeing its impropriety. Do you intend, said Mr. Evans, to carry up all these men with the petition to the house of commons? No, I do not, he replied. Will you then give me leave, says Mr. Evans, to go round to the different divisions, and tell the people it is not your lordship's purpose? He answered by all means. Mr. Evans accordingly went, but it was impossible to guide such a number of people, peaceable as they were. Being all invincibly desirous to go, he was at last obliged to leave the fields, exhausted with heat and fatigue, beseeching them to be peaceable and orderly. At the very time that he left them in perfect harmony and good order, it appears, gentlemen, by the evidence of Sir Philip Jennings Clerke, that Palace Yard was in an uproar, filled with mischievous boys and the lowest dregs of the people.

Gentlemen of the jury, I have all along told you that the crown was aware that it had no case of treason without connecting the noble prisoner with consequences which it was in some luck to find advocates to state without proof to support it. I can only speak for myself; that small as my chance is of ever arriving at that high office, I would not accept of it on the terms of being obliged to produce, as evidence of guilt, against a fellow citizen, that which I have been witness to this day. For Mr. Attorney General

perfectly well knew the innocent and laudable motive with which the protection was given. Yet he produced it to insinuate that lord George Gordon, knowing himself to be the ruler of those villains, set himself up as saviour from their fury. We called lord Stormont to explain this matter to you, who told you that lord George Gordon came to Buckingham House and begged to see the king; saying he might be of great use in quelling the riots. Can there be on earth a greater proof of conscious innocence? For if he had been the wicked mover of them would he have gone to the king to have confessed it by offering to recall his followers from the mischiefs he had provoked? No! but since a publick protest issued by himself and the association reviling the authors of these mischiefs, the protestant cause was still made the pretext, he thought his publick exertions might be useful, as they might tend to remove the prejudices which wicked men had diffused. The king thought so likewise, and therefore, as appears by lord Stormont, refused to see lord George till he had given the test of his loyalty by such exertions. But sure I am our gracious sovereign meant no trap for innocence, nor ever recommended it as such to his servants.

Lord George's language was simply this: "The multitude pretend to be perpetrating these acts under the authority of the protestant petition. I assure your majesty they are not the protestant association, and I shall be glad to be of any service in suppressing them." I say, by God, that man is a ruffian who shall, after this, presume to build upon such honest, artless conduct as an evidence of guilt. But, gentlemen, if lord George Gordon had been guilty of high treason, as is assumed to day, in the face of the cabinet and of the whole parliament, how are they to defend themselves from the misprision of suffering such a man to go at large and to approach his sovereign. The man that conceals the perpetration of treason is himself a traitor; but they are all perfectly safe,

For nobody thought of treason till fears arising from another quarter bewildered their senses.

The king, therefore, and his servants very wisely accepted my noble friend's promise of assistance, and he flew with honest zeal to fulfil it. Sir Philip Jennings Clerke tells you, that he made use of every expression that it was possible for a man in such circumstances to do. He begged them, for God's sake to disperse and go home; hoped the petition would be granted, but that rioting was not the way to effect it. Sir Philip said he felt himself bound without being particularly asked, to say every thing he could in protection of an injured and innocent man, and repeated again, that there was not an art he could possibly make use of that he did not zealously employ; but it was all in vain. I began, says he, to tremble for myself; for lord George read the resolution of the house, which was hostile to them, and said their petition would not be taken into consideration till they were quiet. But did he say, therefore go on to burn and destroy? On the contrary, he helped to pen that motion, and read it to the multitude, as one which he himself had approved. After this he went into the coach with sheriff Pugh, in the city, and there it was that he publickly signed that protection which has been read in evidence against him, although Mr. Fisher, who now stands in my presence, and who has repeatedly told me that he thought lord George Gordon to be as innocent as the child unborn, confessed in the privy council, that he himself had granted similar protections to various people, yet was dismissed, as having done nothing but his duty.

Such is the plain and simple truth. For this just obedience to his majesty's request, do the king's servants come to day into this court, where the king is supposed in person to sit, to turn that obedience into the crime of high treason, and to ask you to put the noble prisoner to death for it.

Gentlemen, you have now heard, upon the solemn oaths of honest, disinterested men, a faithful history of the conduct of lord George Gordon, from the day

that he became a member of the protestant association, to the day that he was committed a prisoner to the Tower, and I have no doubt from the attention with which I have been honoured, that you have still kept in your minds the principles to which I entreated you would apply the evidence, and that you have measured it all by that standard.

You have therefore only to look back to the whole of it together; to reflect on all you have heard concerning him; to trace him in your recollection through every part of the transaction; and considering it with one liberal view, to ask your own honest hearts, whether you can say that this noble and unfortunate youth is a wicked and deliberate traitor who deserves by your verdict to suffer a shameful and ignominious death, and to stain the ancient honours of his house for ever.

The crime which the crown would have fixed upon him is, that he assembled the Protestant Association round the house of commons, not merely to influence and persuade parliament by the earnestness of their supplications, but *actually to coerce it by hostile, rebellious force.* That finding himself disappointed in the success of this coercive policy, he afterwards incited his followers to abolish the legal indulgences to papists which the object of the petition was to repeal, by the burning of their houses of worship, and the destruction of their property, which ended at last in a general attack on the property of all orders of men, religious and civil, on the publick treasures of the nation, and on the very being of the government.

To support a charge of so atrocious and unnatural a complexion, the laws of even arbitrary nations would require the most incontrovertible proof. They would demand either the villain to have been taken in the overt act of wickedness, or if he worked in secret upon others, his guilt to be brought out by the consistent tenour of his conduct, or by the discovery of some plot or conspiracy. The very worst inqui-

sitor that dealt in blood would vindicate the torture at least by plausibility and the semblance of truth.

What evidence then will a jury of Englishmen expect from the servants of the crown, before they deliver up a brother accused before them to ignominy and death? What proof will their consciences exact? What will their plain, and manly understandings accept of? What does the immemorial custom of their fathers, and the written law of this land, warrant them in demanding? Nothing less, in any case of blood, than the clearest and most unequivocal proof. But in this case the statute has not even trusted to the humanity and justice of our general law, but has said in plain, rough, expressive terms provable, that is, says lord Coke, not upon conjectural presumptions or inferences, or strains of wit, but upon direct and plain proof. For the king, lords, and commons, continues that great lawyer, did not use the word *probable*, for then a common argument might have served; but *provable*, which signifies the highest force of demonstration. Now, what evidence, gentlemen of the jury, does the crown offer to you in compliance with these sound and sacred doctrines of justice? Nothing but a few broken, interrupted, disjointed words, without context or connexion, uttered by the speaker in agitation and heat, and heard by those who relate them to you in the midst of tumult and confusion; and even these words, mutilated as they are, in direct opposition to, and inconsistent with, repeated and earnest declarations delivered at the very same time, and on the very same occasion, related to you by a much greater number of persons, and which are absolutely incompatible with the whole tenour of his conduct, proved to you by respectable witnesses, whom we only ceased calling because human life would have been too short to hear the remainder.

What can be added to such observations, which, even if they were clear, carry their own explanation in every one of your minds? Who of us, gentlemen, would be safe, standing at the bar of God, or man, if

we were to be judged not by the regular current of our lives, and conversations, but by detached and unguarded expressions, picked out by malice, and recorded without context or circumstances against us, though directly inconsistent with other expressions delivered at the same time on the same subject, and though repugnant to the whole tenour of our deportment and behaviour. Yet such is the only evidence by which the crown asks you to dip your hands, and to stain your consciences, in the innocent blood of the noble and unfortunate youth who now stands before you. On the mere evidence of *the words* you have heard from their witness which, even if they had stood uncontroverted by the proofs with which we have swallowed them up, or unexplained by circumstances which destroy their malignity, could not, at the very most, amount in law to more than a breach of the act of tumultuous petitioning, if such an act still exist. For the worst malice of his enemies has not been able to bring out the slightest testimony that he has ever directed, countenanced, or approved rebellious force against the legislature of his country; and without which evidence, it is impossible to make a case of treason by the most strained and romantick construction. It is, indeed, astonishing to me, that men can keep the natural colour of their cheeks, when they ask for blood in such a case, even if the prisoner had made no defence. But will they still continue to demand it after what they have heard? It is, really, hardly to be presumed!

I will, gentlemen, just remind the solicitor general, before he begins his reply, what matter he has to encounter.

That the going up in a body was not even originated by lord George, but by others in his absence. That when proposed by him, it was unanimously adopted by the whole association, and consequently their act as much as his; not determined in a conclave, but with open doors, and the resolution published to all the world; known to the ministers and magistrates of the country, who did not even signify

to him, or to any body else, that it was dangerous or illegal. That decency and peace were enjoined and commanded; and that the badges of distinction, which are now cruelly turned into the charge of an hostile array against him, were expressly and publickly directed for the prevention of disorder; that there was not even a walking stick among the populace to disturb the publick tranquillity; and that their demeanour was perfectly decent and temperate till it was disgraced by the acts of a villanous banditti, which have been, however, separated from the Protestant Association by the most incontrovertible proof; and which, even if not so separated, could not have affected lord George but by bringing home their conduct to him.

While the house of commons was deliberating, he repeatedly entreated the crowd to behave with decency and peace, and to retire to their houses. But my noble friend knew not that he was speaking to the enemies of his cause. When they at last dispersed, no man thought or imagined that treason had been committed; and his lordship was carried home by sir James Lowther, a gentleman of the first fortune and character, who tells you, that on the coach being surrounded by the mob, lord George beseeched them to be quiet and to disperse, or parliament would never listen to their petition. He then returned to bed, where he lay unconscious that ruffians were ruining him by their disorders in the night. On Monday, he published an advertisement, reviling the authors of these riots; and, as the protestant cause had been wickedly made the pretext for them, enjoining all who wished well to it, to behave like good citizens. Nor has the crown even attempted to prove that he had either given, or that he afterwards gave, secret instructions in opposition to that publick admonition. He afterwards begged an audience to receive the king's commands; he waited on the ministers; he attended his duty in parliament; and when the multitude, amongst whom there was not a man of the Associated Protestants, again assembled on

the Tuesday, under pretence of the protestant cause, he offered his services, and read a resolution of the house to them, accompanied with every expostulation which a zeal for peace could possibly inspire; and because he was speaking to ruffians and papists, and not to the authors of the petition, and who therefore would not obey him, how is that to be imputed to him?

He afterwards, agreeably to the king's direction, attended the magistrates in their duty, honestly and honourably exerting all his power to quell the fury of the multitude; which circumstance, to the dishonour of the crown, has been scandalously turned against him. Even the protections which he granted publickly in the coach of the sheriff of London, whom he was assisting in his office of magistracy, are produced in evidence of his guilt, though protections of a similar nature were, to the knowledge of the whole privy council granted by Mr. Fisher himself, who now stands in my presence unreproved, and who would have explained their tendency, so as to remove every imputation of criminality, had he been examined.

What then has produced this trial for high treason, or given it when produced the seriousness and solemnity it wears? What but the inversion of all justice by judging from consequences, instead of from causes and designs! What but the artful manner in which the crown has endeavoured to blend the petitioning in a body, and the zeal with which an animated disposition conducted it, with the melancholy crimes that followed! crimes, which the shameful indolence of our magistrates, which the total extinction of all police and government suffered to be committed in broad day, in the delirium of drunkenness, by an unarmed banditti, without a head, without plan or object, and without a refuge from the instant gripe of justice: a horde of ruffians, with whom the Associated Protestants and their president had no manner of connexion, and whose cause they overturned, dishonoured, and ruined.

How iniquitous then is it to attempt, without evidence, to infect your imaginations, who are upon your oaths dispassionately and disinterestedly to try the offence of merely assembling a multitude with a petition to repeal a law (which has happened so often in all our memories before) by blending it with the subsequent catastrophe, on which every man's mind may be supposed to retain some degree of irritation? This is indeed wicked. It is taking the advantage of all the infirmities of our nature. Do the prosecutors wish you, while you are listening to the evidence, to connect it with consequences in spite of reason and truth, in order to hang the millstone of prejudice round the prisoner's innocent neck. If there be such men, may Heaven forgive them for the attempt, and inspire you with fortitude and wisdom, to do your duty to your fellow citizen, with calm, steady, reflecting minds.

Gentlemen, I have no manner of doubt that you will. I am indeed, sure you cannot but see (notwithstanding my great inability, increased by a perturbation of mind arising, thank God, from no dishonest cause) that there has been no evidence on the part of the crown, to fix the guilt of the late commotions upon my noble client, but that on the contrary, we have been able to resist the *probability;* I might almost say the *possibility* of the charge, not only by living witnesses, whom we ceased to call, because the trial would never have ended, but by the evidence of all the blood that has paid the forfeit of that guilt already; which, I will take upon me to say is the strongest and most unanswerable proof that the combination of natural events ever brought together for the shield of an innocent man. It is, that in the trial of all the black catalogue of culprits who expired on the gibbets, though conducted by the ablest servants of the crown, with an eye, and with a laudable eye, to the investigation of the matter which to day engages your attention, no one fact appeared which showed any plan, any object, any leader. That finally, out of forty-four thousand persons who signed the petition of the Protestants, or among

those who were convicted, tried, or even apprehended on suspicion; or of all the felons that were let loose from prisons, and who assisted in the destruction and plunder of our property, not a single wretch was to be found who could even attempt to save his own life by the plausible promise of giving evidence on the present occasion.

Gentlemen, what can overturn such proof as this? Surely a good man might, without superstition, believe that such an union of events was something more than the natural issues of life, and that the Providence of God was watchful for the protection of innocence and truth. I may now, therefore, relieve you from the pain of hearing me any longer, and be myself relived from the pain of speaking on a subject which agitates and distresses me. Since, gentlemen, lord George Gordon stands clear of every hostile act or purpose against the legislature of his country, or the properties of his fellow subjects—since the whole tenour of his conduct repels the belief of the traitorous purpose charged in the indictment—my task is finished. I shall make no address to your passions. I will not remind you of the long and rigorous imprisonment he has suffered. I will not speak to you of his great youth, of his illustrious birth, and of his uniformly animated and generous zeal in parliament for the constitution of his country. Such topicks might be useful in the balance of a doubtful case; yet even then, I should have trusted to the honest hearts of Englishmen to have felt them without excitation. At present, the plain and rigid rules of justice and truth are sufficient to entitle me to your verdict; and may God Almighty, who is the sacred author of both, fill your minds with the deepest impressions of them, and with virtue to follow those impressions! You will then restore my innocent client to liberty, and me to that peace of mind, which, since the protection of that innocence in any part depended upon me, I have never known.

DUKE OF BEDFORD'S SPEECH,

ON A MOTION TO ADDRESS THE THRONE FOR THE DISMISSAL OF MINISTERS.

IN recording the subsequent sample of the eloquence of this distinguished nobleman, we eagerly seize on so appropriate an occasion to introduce to the more intimate acquaintance of our readers his character and pretensions, by prefixing to the speech a delineation of them, which, though executed by the hand of friendship, has been admitted, by those of less indulgence and partiality towards him than Mr. Fox, to be distorted by no great exaggeration of praise, or to be disguised by no sedulous exclusion of defects.

In March 1802, the Duke of Bedford, in the prime of life, and in the midst of usefulness, very suddenly died. Leaving no son, the peerage devolved on his brother, who was, at the time, a member of the house of commons. The borough of Tavistock which he represented became thus vacated. In moving for a writ for a new election for that place, Mr. Fox as prefatory to the motion, pronounced the eulogium on his deceased friend to which we have alluded. Whatever slight variation of opinion may be entertained respecting the exactness of the resemblance, it has been, and must be confessed, that the portrait he has drawn, is a masterly display of ability.

We know indeed, of no example of more happy and complete success, than this eulogium, in a species

of eloquence of all others, perhaps, the most hazardous and difficult.

MR. CHAIRMAN,

"If the sad event which has recently occurred were only a private misfortune, however heavy, I should feel the impropriety of obtruding upon the house the feelings of private friendship, and would have sought some other opportunity of expressing those sentiments of gratitude and affection, which must be ever due from me to the memory of the excellent person, whose loss gives occasion to the sort of motion of course, which I am about to make to the house. It is because I consider the death of the duke of Bedford as a great publick calamity, because the publick itself seems so to consider it; because, not in this town only, but in every part of the kingdom, the impression made by it seems to be the strongest and most universal, that ever appeared upon the loss of a subject; it is for these reasons that I presume to hope for the indulgence of the house, if I deviate in some degree, from the common course, and introduce my motion in a manner which I must confess to be unusual on similar occasions. At the same time, I trust sir, that I shall not be suspected of any intention to abuse the indulgence which I ask, by dwelling, with the fondness of friendship, upon the various excellencies of the character to which I have alluded, much less by entering into a history of the several events of his life, which might serve to illustrate it. There was something in that character so peculiar and striking, and the just admiration which his virtues commanded was such, that to expatiate upon them in any detail is unnecessary, as upon this occasion it would be improper. That he has been much lamented and generally, cannot be wondered at, for surely there never was a more just occasion of publick sorrow. To lose such a man!—at such a time!—so unexpectedly! The particular stage of his life too in which we lost him, must add to every feeling of regret, and make the disappointment more severe

and poignant to all thinking minds. Had he fallen at an earlier period, the publick to whom he could then, comparatively speaking at least, be but little known, would rather have compassionated and condoled with the feelings of his friends and relations, than have been themselves very severely afflicted by the loss. It would have been suggested, and even we who were the most partial must have admitted, that the expectations raised by the dawn are not always realized in the meridian of life. If the fatal event had been postponed, the calamity might have been alleviated by the consideration, that mankind could not have looked for any length of time to the exercise of his virtues and talents. But he was snatched away at a moment when society might have reasonably hoped, that after having accomplished all the good of which it was capable, he would have descended not immaturely into the tomb. He had, on the one hand, lived long enough to have his character fully confirmed and established, while on the other, what remained of life seemed, according to all human expectations, to afford ample space and scope for the exercise of the virtues of which that character was composed. The tree was old enough to enable us to ascertain the quality of the fruit which it would bear, and, at the same time, young enough to promise many years of produce. The high rank and splendid fortune of the great man of whom I am speaking, though not circumstances which in themselves either can or ought to conciliate the regard and esteem of rational minds, are yet so far considerable, as an elevated situation, by making him who is placed in it more powerful and conspicuous, causes his virtues or vices to be more useful or injurious to society. In this case the rank and wealth of the person are to be attended to in another and a very different point of view. To appreciate his merits justly, we must consider, not only the advantages, but the disadvantages, connected with such circumstances. The dangers attending prosperity in general, and high situation in particular, the corrupt influence of flattery, to

which men in such situations are more peculiarly exposed, have been the theme of moralists in all ages and in all nations: but how are these dangers increased with respect to him who succeeds in his childhood to the first rank and fortune in a kingdom such as this, and who having lost his parents, is never approached by any being who is not represented to him as in some degree his inferiour! Unless blessed with a heart uncommonly susceptible and disposed to virtue, how should he who has scarcely ever seen an equal, have a common feeling, and a just sympathy, for the rest of mankind, who seemed to have been formed rather *for* him, and as instruments of his gratification, than together *with* him for the general purposes of nature? Justly has the Roman satirist remarked,

> Rarus enim fermè sensus communis in illa
> Fortuna.——

"This was precisely the case of the duke of Bedford; nor do I know that his education was perfectly exempt from defects usually belonging to such situations; but virtue found her own way, and on the very side where the danger was the greatest was her triumph most complete. From the blame of selfishness no man was ever so eminently free. No man put his own gratification so low, that of others so high in his estimation To contribute to the welfare of his fellow citizens was the constant, unremitted pursuit of his life, by his example and his beneficence to render better, wiser, and happier. He truly loved the publick, but not only the publick, according to the usual acceptance of the word; not merely the body corporate, if I may so express myself, which bears that name, but man in his individual capacity; all who came within his notice and deserved his protection, were objects of his generous concern. From his station the sphere of his acquaintance was larger than that of most other men; yet in his extended circle, few, very few, could be counted to whom he had not found some occasion to be serviceable. To be useful, whether to the publick at large, whether to his relations

and nearer friends, or even to an individual of his species, was the ruling passion of his life.

"He died, it is true, in a state of celibacy; but if they may be called a man's children whose concerns are as dear to him as his own; to protect whom from evil is the daily object of his care; to promote whose welfare he exerts every faculty of which he is possessed: if such, I say, are to be esteemed our children, no man had ever a more numerous family than the Duke of Bedford.

"Private friendships are not, I own, a fit topick for this house, or any publick assembly; but it is difcult for any one who had the honour and happiness to be his friend, not to advert, when speaking of such a man, to his conduct and behaviour in that interesting character. In his friendship, not only he was disinterested and sincere, but in him were to be found all the characteristick excellencies which have ever distinguished the men most renowned for that most amiable of all virtues. Some are warm, but volatile and inconstant; he was warm too, but steady and unchangeable. Never once was he known to violate any of the duties of that sacred relation. Where his attachment was placed, there it remained, or rather there it grew: for it may be more truly said of this man, than of any other that ever existed, that if he loved you at the beginning of the year, and you did nothing to forfeit his esteem, he would love you still more at the end of it. Such was the uniformly progressive state of his affections, no less than of his virtue and wisdom.

"It has happened to many, and he was certainly one of the number, to grow wiser as they advanced in years. Some have even improved in virtue; but it has generally been in that class of virtue only which consists in resisting the allurements of vice, and too often have these advantages been counterbalanced by the loss, or at least the diminution of that openness of heart, that warmth of feeling, that readiness of sympathy, that generosity of spirit, which have been reckoned among the characteristick attributes of

youth. In this case it was far otherwise. Endued by nature with an unexampled firmness of character, he could bring his mind to a more complete state of discipline than any man I ever knew. But he had, at the same time, such a comprehensive and just view of all the moral questions, that he well knew to distinguish between those inclinations, which, if indulged, must be pernicious, and the feelings, which, if cultivated, might prove beneficial to mankind. All bad propensities, therefore, if any such he had, he completely conquered and suppressed, while, on the other hand, no man ever studied the trade by which he was to get his bread—the profession by which he hoped to rise in wealth and honour—nor even the higher arts of poetry or eloquence, in pursuit of a fancied immortality, with more zeal and ardour than this excellent person cultivated the noble art of doing good to his fellow creatures. In this pursuit, above all others, diligence is sure of success, and accordingly it would be difficult to find an example of any other man to whom so many individuals are indebted for happiness or comfort, or to whom the publick at large owe more essential obligation.

"So far was he from slackening or growing cold in these generous pursuits, that the only danger was, lest, notwithstanding his admirable good sense, and that remarkable soberness of character, which distinguished him, his munificence might, if he had lived, have engaged him in expenses to which even his princely fortune would have been found inadequate. Thus the only circumstance like a failing in this great character was, that, while indulging his darling passion for making himself useful to others, he might be too regardless of future consequences to himself and family. The love of utility was indeed his ruling passion. Even in his recreations (and he was by no means naturally averse to such as were suitable to his station of life, no less than in his graver hours) he so much loved to keep this grand object in view, that he seemed by degrees to grow weary of every amusement which was not, in some degree connected with

it. Agriculture he judged rightly to be the most useful of all sciences, and more particularly in the present state of affairs, he conceived it to be the department in which his services to his country might be most beneficial. To agriculture, therefore, he principally applied himself, nor can it be doubted but with his capacity, activity, and energy, he must have attained his object, and made himself eminently useful in that most important branch of political economy. Of the particular degree of his merit in this respect, how much the publick is already indebted to him, how much benefit it may still expect to derive from the effects of his unwearied diligence and splendid example, is a question upon which many members of this house can form a much more accurate judgment than I can pretend to do. But of his motives to these exertions I am competent to judge, and can affirm without a doubt, that it was the same which actuated him throughout—an ardent desire to employ his faculties in the way, whatever it might be, in which he could most contribute to the good of his country, and the general interest of mankind.

"With regard to his politicks, I feel a great unwillingness to be wholly silent on the subject, and at the same time much difficulty in treating it with propriety, when I consider to whom I am addressing myself. I am sensible that those principles upon which in any other place I should not hesitate to pronounce an unqualified eulogium, may be thought by some, perhaps by the majority of this house, rather to stand in need of apology and exculpation, than to form a proper subject for panegyrick. But even in this view I may be allowed to offer a few words in favour of my departed friend. I believe few, if any, of us are so infatuated with the extreme notions of philosophy as not to feel a partial veneration for the principles, some leaning even to the prejudices of the ancestors, especially if they were of any note, from whom we are respectively descended. Such biases are always, as I suspect, favourable to the

cause of patriotism and publick virtue; I am sure, at least, that in Athens and Rome they were so considered. No man had ever less of family pride, in the bad sense, than the Duke of Bedford; but he had a great and just respect for his ancestors. Now if upon the principle to which I have alluded, it was in Rome thought excusable in one of the Claudii to have, in conformity with the general manners of their race, something too much of an aristocratical pride and haughtiness, surely in this country it is not unpardonable in a Russel to be zealously attached to the rights of the subject, and peculiarly tenacious of the popular parts of our constitution. It is excusable, at least, in one who numbers among his ancestors the great earl of Bedford, the patron of Pym, and the friend of Hampden, to be an enthusiastick lover of liberty: nor is it to be wondered at if a descendant of lord Russel should feel more than common horrour for arbitrary power, and a quick, perhaps even a jealous discernment of any approach or tendency in the system of government to that dreaded evil. But whatever may be our differences in regard to principles, I trust there is no member of this house who is not liberal enough to do justice to upright conduct even in a political adversary. Whatever, therefore, may be thought of those principles to which I have alluded, the political conduct of my much lamented friend must be allowed by all to have been manly, consistent, and sincere.

"It now remains for me to touch upon the last melancholy scene in which this excellent man was to be exhibited, and to all those who admire his character, let it be some consolation that his exit was in every respect conformable to his past life. I have already noticed that prosperity could not corrupt him. He had now to undergo a trial of an obstinate nature. But in every instance he was alike true to his character, and in moments of extreme bodily pain and approaching dissolution, when it might be expected that a man's very feeling would be concentrated in his personal sufferings—his very thoughts occupied

by the awful event impending—even in these moments he put by all selfish considerations; kindness to his friends was the sentiment still uppermost in his mind, and he employed himself, to the last hour of his life, in making the most considerate arrangements for the happiness and comfort of those who were to survive him. While in the enjoyment of prosperity he had learned and practised all those milder virtues which adversity alone is supposed capable of teaching; and in the hour of pain and approaching death, he had that calmness and serenity which are thought to belong exclusively to health of body, and a mind at ease.

"If I have taken an unusual, and possibly an irregular course, upon this extraordinary occasion, I am confident the house will pardon me. They will forgive something, no doubt, to the warmth of private friendship, to sentiments of gratitude which I must feel, and, whenever I have an opportunity, must express to the latest hour of my life. But the consideration of the publick utility, to which I have so much adverted as the ruling principle in the mind of my friend, will weigh far more with them. They will in their wisdom acknowledge, that to celebrate and to perpetuate the memory of great and meritorious individuals, is in effect an essential service to the community. It was not, therefore, for the purpose of performing the pious office of friendship by fondly strewing flowers upon his tomb, that I have drawn your attention to the character of the Duke of Bedford. The motive that actuates me, is one more suitable to what were his views. It is that this great character may be strongly impressed upon the minds of all who hear me; that they may see it; that they may feel it; that they may discourse of it in their domestick circles; that they may speak of it to their children, and hold it up to the imitation of posterity. If he could now be sensible to what passes here below, I am sure that nothing could give him so much satisfaction as to find that we are endeavouring

to make his memory and example, as he took care his life should be useful to mankind.

"I will conclude with applying to the present occasion a beautiful passage from the speech of a very young orator.* It may be thought perhaps to savour too much of the sanguine views of youth to stand the test of a rigid philosophical inquiry; but it is at least cheering and consolatory, and that in this instance it may be exemplified, is, I am confident, the sincere wish of every man who hears me:—'crime,' says he, 'is a curse only to the period in which it is successful; but virtue, whether fortunate or otherwise, blesses not only its own age, but the remotest posterity, and is as beneficial by its example as by its immediate effect."

The ensuing speech, one of the most celebrated efforts of the duke of Bedford's eloquence, was delivered in support of a motion which he made in the house of lords, on the twenty-second of March, 1798, to address the throne, stating to his majesty *the urgent and indispensable necessity which existed of employing other ministers, and adopting other counsels.*" The house of lords, however, entertaining very opposite views of the character of the ministry, and of the policy they had adopted, from those which his grace endeavoured to inculcate, rejected the proposition by a great majority.

SPEECH, &c.

MR. SPEAKER,

IT will not require much detail of facts, or a great deal of argument to prove that, in the career which they have pursued, the present ministers have been supported by your implicit confidence; that they have been strengthened by every kind of concurrence which could give energy to their operations, and have never upon any occasion been thwarted by an opposition on the part of this house, that could

* The honourable William Lamb.

obstruct their success in the system upon which they had acted. Whenever you have been called upon to inquire, not only into partial measures, but into the whole conduct of administration, you have uniformly refused that inquiry. They were left at liberty to follow the plan which they had embraced, and were furnished with the most ample means to carry it into execution. If then, in the course of what I shall state to your lordships, I shall be able to show that, notwithstanding all the confidence they enjoyed, notwithstanding all the means with which they were entrusted, much, if not the whole of that calamitous state to which this country is reduced, is owing to the misconduct, and to the incapacity of those by whom our affairs have been conducted, I shall have established this point, that, by their exertions, no hopes can be entertained that we can be rescued from our difficulties, and that the motion which I propose is the only remedy for our distress.

If I shall show, from the proofs I have to advance, and the arguments I shall produce, that much of our calamitous situation is owing to the misconduct of his majesty's ministers, whatever confidence they might affect to demand, it will not be attributed as rashness in me to call for the countenance of the house in the motion I shall make for their dismission from the councils of the sovereign, as the only effectual remedy for the evils of the country.

I shall not at present detain you, by entering into a discussion of the origin and causes of the war. It will not, however, be impertinent or unreasonable again to remind you, that, prior to the commencement of the war, ministers were charged by those who were friends to peace, with pursuing that line of conduct, which infallibly led to hostilities, and that the war was the natural consequence of the policy upon which ministers had long acted. My object now is to show you that the only remedy for your calamities is to remove the men to whom they are to be ascribed. So far as regards the criminal accusation which the subject might suggest against ministers, from this, for the present, I shall forbear. This subject will be

better suited to a moment of calm and of safety, when men shall be able to view their situation as it really is, and when the absence of danger will enable us more coolly to enter into the investigation of guilt.

With whatever sentiments ministers may have been supposed to contemplate the prospect of a war, and whatever means they may have employed to prevent it, yet it will be recollected that the declaration of war, on the part of the French, was a matter that excited the most lively joy. They could not conceal their satisfaction that the French seemed to have committed the first aggression, and furnished a pretext for war. It was viewed not as a matter of melancholy and regret, but of triumph and exultation. Those, however, who thought that greater exertions and a different conduct ought to have been employed to prevent a rupture with France, left no effort untried to put an end to the evils in which we had been involved, and as far as possible to retard their progress. Remonstrances were made against the measures which ministers pursued. It was contended that by a firm, a manly, and an open conduct, France might still be turned to peace, and that the ground of dispute might be removed. Parliament was called upon to declare that this country would not interfere in the internal affairs of France; and afterwards, when the warlike views of ministers became more systematick and less disguised, parliament was called upon to address his majesty to enter into no treaties with foreign powers, which would form an argument against peace, and embarrass the attainment of that object. To this no answer was made, but that since we were embarked in the contest, it was necessary to go on, and that every exertion ought to be made to strengthen the country, and secure ultimate success. Again, to remove all misunderstanding of the objects and views entertained in the prosecution of the war, parliament was called upon to say, that the war was not undertaken for the purpose of aggrandisement, but upon the most benevolent principles of general interest; that as the French were then defeated and

reduced within their own territories, this was the moment to come forward with offers of peace. To this it was answered, in the elation of prosperity, that being embarked in the contest, we ought to persevere till the existing government of France was replaced by a better system, and that the moment of success was not the moment to sue for peace. Such was the language with which every attempt to oppose the progress of the war was resisted. Ministers indeed had not then developed all their schemes, and avowed all their objects. They had not then mounted their *lofty war-horse*, which they afterwards bestrode. They did not wish to alarm the country with too expensive a plan of warfare, lest they should be diverted from its prosecution, and inclined to peace. They wished to lead us on gradually till it was impossible to retreat. Every effort to prevent the progress of the warlike system was ineffectual. At this period the debt incurred was only about seven millions, and had added an annual charge upon the country of 250,000l.

The next session of parliament opened with a speech from the throne, in which ministers (for I take the speech from the throne as the speech of the minister) began to express a different language. We were now told that we were engaged in the contest not merely for the defence of our allies, and for repelling aggression, but we were embarked in a contest to resist the progress of anarchy, impiety, and irreligion; that it was impossible to talk of peace till the monarchy of France was restored. Now it was that the schemes of ministers were developed—Now it was that the full extent of their object was avowed—Now it was that the most frantick projects were conceived; and, in the pride of a momentary success, ministers imagined they would erect temples and trophies upon the mutilated carcases of their enemies. In these wild and visionary expectations, however, they were disappointed.

But, in the midst of this destructive career, ministers were supported by this house. In their exterminating projects they were supported by your confidence. Inflamed with indignation at the atrocities of the enc-

my, you too became unjust, and assumed the right of that vengeance which belongs to Heaven.

A few there were, indeed, who were not misled by these frantick schemes, nor blinded by this mistaken zeal. Unawed by clamour, undisturbed by calumny, they opposed the presumptuous boasts of the minister. They tried to induce parliament to employ a milder language, to lay aside that arrogant tone which could only serve to irritate and to inflame animosity, and to declare that no particular form of government in France would be considered as an obstacle to peace. It was contended that, if the views of ministers were directed to the conquest of France, they were foolish and chimercial; and, if intended to sow internal dissension, they only strengthened the hands and confirmed the power of the existing rulers. All these exertions, however, were in vain. It was soon found that new treaties had been formed to extend the system of war, and to embarrass the attainment of peace.

At the close of this session, the same efforts which had been employed to put an end to the contest were renewed. Resolutions were proposed in another house to ascertain what was the real object for which the war was pursued. Ministers, however, contended that it was idle, and that it was impolitick to state their reasons at such a moment. They contended that we had been successful, that our resources were adequate to every emergency, and that, though we might be somewhat affected, yet we were not, like the miserable government of France, obliged to have recourse to forced loans. Towards the close of that session, I did myself the honour to move certain resolutions to your lordships. We had then been successful. I wished to call your lordships' attention to our situation then, and to seize that opportunity for putting an end to the war. I likewise called upon you to advise his majesty to abstain from any interference in the internal affairs of France; but that, if you did mean to interfere, you would state some precise points. I did believe that would have produced some advantage; for, in the confused state of France then, the

enemies of the existing government would have known the particular objects which you wished to obtain. We were told, exultingly—'What! now in the moment of success, shall we treat when we have such confident hopes of attaining all we wish? No! Jacobinism in France must be destroyed! not only the present rulers must be cut off, but all who entertain the same principles and sentiments with them must be destroyed. We will never treat with men who have died their hands in the blood of their sovereign, and who have dared to call our king a tyrant, and our parliament usurpers. Let us make one grand effort, and die, if we must die, with swords in our hands.'* Such was the proud and boastful language then employed by ministers, and I am glad to find that the noble secretary seems now to remember what, on many occasions, he and his colleagues seem to have forgotten; for it affords an admirable proof of the weakness of their conduct. In the hour of prosperity, indeed, their language was lofty, and their tone determined. But did they persevere in this temper? Did they discover a firmness in adversity corresponding to their presumption in success? Look at their conduct the next year, and see how these pretensions were justified. The session then closed, and if peace had been obtained, we should not have experienced the financial difficulties under which we have since laboured, nor have to dread those with which we are now threatened. The sum then added to the capital of our debt was about twenty-two millions, and the annual amount of taxes one million.

Next session the sentiments of the people had undergone a considerable change. The prospects held out to them had been disappointed. The appearance of a war of extermination now threatened them, when it was doubtful which party would be its victim. When the French were to be the objects of it, the prospect was pleasing; but its aspect was changed when it turned against ourselves. But not merely out of doors,

* A cry of 'Hear, hear!' from Lord Grenville.

but in parliament itself this change had taken place. It was necessary, therefore, to use some management with those with whom the war was by no means so popular. The distraction of the French republick, the disorder and approaching ruin of her finances, the cause of religion and social order were insisted upon. Still, however, the desire of peace gained ground.—In the house of commons, those who had uniformly exerted themselves for the restoration of peace, made new attempts to pave the way for that object. Upon this occasion ministers moved an amendment, in which it was said that we were "determined to persevere in the contest till such a government was established in France as might be able to maintain the accustomed relations of peace and amity." Not a word was said to explain when such a government was to be expected, or in what it would be allowed to consist. It was contended, therefore, by those who were friendly to peace, that it was necessary to abandon that system which led to extermination, and to treat at a time when, if unsuccessful, we were able to continue the war with vigour. Will you treat under the difficulties you now suffer? it was said. Will you throw this country at the feet of France; and recognise French superiority? No, it was replied, we will not recognise the superiority of France, but we will prove that we distrust the capacity of those who have involved us in our present difficulties. Will you treat with the republick of France, was it contended, and acknowledge that your king and parliament are unfit to govern you? Will you agree to the surrender of those places which it has ever been considered impossible for the French to hold with safety to this country? Will you give up your West India islands, and surrender your commercial advantages? We were told too, that the finances of France were exhausted; that it was impossible she could maintain the contest, and that our perseverance would be ultimately successful. How false these financial speculations were, we have since experienced. Amidst all these topicks, however, the lofty tone of ministers were softened,

They were afraid their places might be endangered, if they persisted in the unqualified objections to the government of France which they had formerly urged. Their lofty spirit fell as their difficulties increased; their concessions advanced in proportion as their embarrassments thickened; they were willing to concede, but their concession was of no advantage to their country.—Their original tone was too high; and in their gradually descending scale they still were too high for the occasion on which concession was required; they encouraged the demands of the enemy, because the enemy knew that ministers would ultimately accede to their demand. In this way concession only produced disgrace, without promoting conciliation.

In the beginning of next session we were told in the speech from the throne, that the internal situation of France had at last led to a crisis which might lead to events which none could yet foresee, and that his majesty, in case the result should be favourable, would meet overtures of peace from France. Those who had uniformly promoted those measures now urged the propriety of making an effort, without delay, for the conclusion of peace. Ministers renewed their former objections, and the assignats of France afforded ample matter of speculation on the ruin of the finances. Ministers, however, did not wait long for that trial of the new order of things in France, which at first they had deemed so necessary. I do not know that those who had pressed the necessity of peace could claim any merit for the speedy resolution which ministers announced of opening the way for negotiation. Many have doubted the propriety of the steps they took for the purpose, and many have suspected that they were not sincere. It was thought proper to make some advances to negotiation, by a note from Mr. Wickham to Barthelemi, the French envoy at Basle. I have ever thought that this was the course the least likely to be attended with success which could have been employed. This opinion I have heard avowed in conversation by men of all parties, although I could not prevail upon them to express the same sentiments in this house. If they

were really sincere, it surely would have been prudent in those who for years had employed the most offensive language against the French, to have been particularly careful not to disoblige by the very mode which they pretended to follow for conciliation. The fate of that negotiation is well known, and its true object was strongly suspected to have been merely to satisfy the prevailing inclination for peace.—Look at the circumstances and conduct of the first negotiation of lord Malmesbury. I shall not go at length into a topick so often discussed. If ministers, contrary to every appearance, were sincere upon that occasion, must they not have been the most incapable administration that ever existed, to adopt the course which they pursued? There was nothing conciliating in its beginning, or in its progress. Every ground of suspicion was given to the enemy against the sincerity of ministers. A minister was sent with power to conclude and not to treat, and to treat for the emperour without authority. Upon this subject it has been vainly attempted to obtain those documents which develop the true state of some very important points of negotiation. If these documents are refused, then I am entitled to conclude that they contain nothing to justify ministers in the demand of Belgium as a *sine qua non;* that ministers had no authority from the emperour to urge such a condition.

Notwithstanding the original pretences from which the war was said to be undertaken, to give protection to the oppressed, to check the career of mad ambition, and to defend property, what were the terms on which we proposed to conclude a peace? All the great powers were to be benefited at the expense of the smaller. While Poland was allowed to be divided without a remonstrance, new schemes of partition were devised by those who pretended to have interfered for the protection of the weak, and for the interest of all. France was to have retained some of her conquests; the emperour was to have received compensations for his losses, and the Dutch settlements in the east were to be the portion of Great

Britain. Upon this occasion, Belgium, as a *sine qua non*, was not to remain with France. Upon this point, lord Malmesbury's first negotiation was broken off; while many thought that, considering the importance of peace to this country, ministers ought to have made that cession as the means of obtaining peace. How much more necessary would it have appeared to give up Belgium, had our financial situation then been ascertained; had it been known that the bank was in danger of stopping payment; and what can be thought of those, who, warned of the danger, still persevered in the measures by which its solidity was shaken? The *sine qua non* of Belgium, however, was insisted upon, and after many millions were squandered in support of our pretensions, it was at last found necessary that they should be dropped.

If sincere in the next attempt, surely it was not greatly in the spirit of conciliation, or with probability of success, that the noble lord who had failed in the first mission should again be chosen as the negotiator. I do not question the talents of the noble lord, but I cannot help thinking that the circumstances of his former negotiation placed him in a situation of prejudice which no other person would have had to encounter. Without going into the circumstances of this negotiation, I shall only remind you of the efforts which were made last session to prevail upon you to resort to measures to attain that peace which the present ministers had in vain endeavoured to obtain. The haughty demeanour which they had observed, the irritating conduct they had pursued, disqualified them for acting the part of conciliation with any credit for sincerity, or any chance of success. The insolence which they had displayed in prosperity was not followed by firmness in adversity; and their concessions, though never calculated to procure peace, betrayed them to the enemy as weak and wavering statesmen, from whom every concession might ultimately be obtained. When such was the character of ministers, and such the light in which they were viewed by the enemy,

how could it be expected that peace would be the result of their hollow negotiations?

At the end of five years of war then let me call the attention of the house to the situation in which we stood at the beginning of the contest, and that which we now hold. We began the war in conjunction with the greatest confederacy ever known in Europe, and we are now without a single ally but Portugal? It was then said what would be our situation, obliged to wage war alone with France, at peace with the other nations of Europe? How favourable a situation this, to that in which we now stand! We should have entered upon the contest with ample resources, and in the worst event we should have seen at some years distance that calamity we now experience. Notwithstanding all the expense which the war has heaped upon us, we see not a single effort exerted in vigorous attack. We are reduced to a state of inert self-defence. What hope of success have we in protracted war? What prospect have we of its termination? What prospect have we to cheer our gloom or to compensate for our sacrifices? Our exertions, my lords, under the auspices of the present ministers, are as hopeless as they are incalculable.

I know, my lords, that the subject of finance is irksome to you. But let me entreat you to consider the magnitude of the debt under which this country labours. The annual charge entailed upon this country in the course of a few years war is equal to the amount of the debt at the time when the present ministers came into power. Without mentioning the different corps of supplementary cavalry, &c. which had been raised at a great expense to the country, the permanent debt of the nation was doubled in the short space of five years. Can you think, then, that no blame can attach to the men who have squandered so profusely the resources of the nation without fruit or advantage? Do you think that the review of what we were and what we are now, what we have spent and what we have gained, or rather lost, affords no proof of the incapacity of the present ministers; and

that under their auspices you can have any hope that your affairs will be conducted with ability and success?

While we contemplate from without a situation of affairs so afflicting, there is nothing in our internal state to afford us any consolation. While our burthens have increased our privileges have been abridged. We are now living under laws which are repugnant to the best principles which our ancestors laboured to establish. But there is another topick which this review suggests, on which I know not how to speak. Consider, my lords, the situation of Ireland at the present moment. It has been said that you ought not to interfere in the affairs of Ireland. But do not the ministers of this country interfere in the affairs of Ireland? Do not the ministers of this country, by the system which they pursue, alienate from you the affections of the sister kingdom? My lords, were I to enter into a detail of the atrocities which have been committed in Ireland, the picture would appal the stoutest heart. It could be proved that the most shocking atrocities have been perpetrated; but indeed what could be expected if men, kept in strict discipline, were all at once allowed to give loose to their fury and their passions. To the military, then, I do not impute the blame, but to those by whom their excesses have been permitted and encouraged. Certain it is that two distinct and opposite orders have been issued for regulating the conduct of the military; one by which they were allowed to act without the authority of the civil power; and the other by which they are restrained from acting without that authority. It is known that regiments have published declarations in which they state that certain persons shall find, before they are delivered into the hands of the civil power, that such a regiment is not to be trifled with. These insulting proceedings too are sanctioned by the countenance of government. What then must be the fatal consequences of these measures, if not checked by the introduction of a more conciliating system; and what prospect is there that conciliation will ever

be employed with success by men who have loosened by their misconduct the bonds which unite Great Britain and the sister kingdom?

I think that I have said enough to show that you are now called upon to address his majesty for the dismissal of his present ministers. I am curious to hear what arguments will be employed to prove that the present ministers are the men in the kingdom the best qualified for the offices they hold. They have been often warned of the mischiefs with which their measures were pregnant. They have laughed at all advice, and have persevered in their own system with an obstinacy equalled only by the calamities which it has produced. But it may be said their intention was good. Admitting that this were the case, how has it happened that every act they have performed has tended not to raise, but to disgrace the country. Perhaps too it may be contended that they are the only men qualified for the stations they occupy. They may arrogantly maintain that they are the only men whose loyalty and integrity are beyond doubt. I will be bold to assert, however, that in this and the other house of parliament there is a sufficient number of men of great talents and fair character to form a cabinet capable of conducting the affairs of this country with ability and success. Will ministers deny this to be the case?

Perhaps, however, the arrogant language which some of his majesty's ministers have held may be supposed to allude to those with whom I act; for I scarcely think I shall be considered as a candidate for office, or as holding myself out as qualified for high publick situations. Those persons, then, with whom it is my honour and pride to act, are the men against whom these suspicions are insinuated; I ask, then, what is there in their conduct to justify the charge, or to support so arrogant a pretension? Who is the man who may be considered as a candidate for office? Is it not the man of compliant disposition who will descend to every artifice to gain power. Who court majorities? Men bold and presumptuous in success,

weak and submissive in danger. Have we deserted the principles we have professed? Have we by every fawning art courted the favour of majorities? Have we abandoned the uniform line of conduct upon which we have acted? Let the world judge, then, who are the candidates for office and the worshippers of power. If it be ground of apprehension and of jealousy that we have never abandoned our principles and belied our professions, then we may have justly incurred such suspicion. We have said, and still maintain, that a reform in parliament is necessary to infuse new vigour into the constitution; to control the overgrown influence of the crown, to check that enormous influence which the minister has derived by the creation of peers, when peers are sent to this house by dozens.*

If any noble lord conceives that I am disorderly, I beg that he will proceed according to the rules of the house. Let him put down the words he thinks were improperly used, and take the opinion of the house upon them. To the decision of this house I shall always submit: but I will not be interrupted unless these forms are complied with. †

Then I must hope I was not disorderly. I was saying that we ought to guard against the influence of aristocracy. I think the house of commons is no longer likely to have the independence it used to have, now that the minister selects all the men of opulence and character to sit in this house. It must be acknowledged, that such are the persons on whom distinctions and honours ought to be bestowed; but I am afraid that the consequence of this system will be, that at length there will no longer be country gentlemen of sufficient fortune to incur the expense of a contested election. Thus the influence of the crown will increase, because almost every member of the house of commons will be in the nomination of the

* Lord Sydney here called the Duke of Bedford to order.

† Lord Sydney signifying, that he did not mean to take the Duke's words down, his Grace proceeded.

minister; and the few places which now send independent members will sink into the situation of *rotten boroughs*.

Upon these grounds I am a friend to parliamentary reform; and, if that be the objection which is held out against those who act with me, it is an objection from which we shall never shrink! I am also, like them, a friend to our sovereign, and to the constitution of our country. When imputations are made against a body of men, it is competent for them to justify themselves. Perhaps the same rule might be extended to individuals; but had not my conduct been made the subject of animadversion, I should not have thought it necessary to have troubled your lordships with any observations upon it.

This subject leads me to another, upon which I can only hope, from your indulgence, to be heard for a few minutes. The first time I had the honour of calling the attention of your lordships to this subject, I was told, it could not be of any importance. The second time it was said, that the manner in which I had brought it forward, justified its being rejected, especially as I had for six weeks absented myself from this house. Those who were present on that occasion will recollect, that I did not consider it a matter of much importance myself when the discussion should come on, as I could have no hope of success, and consequently none of benefiting the country by any exertion I might make. Indeed I am anxious to show, that I rather brought it forward in compliance with the suggestion of my friends, than in consequence of any wish of my own. At the same time I will not admit that my absenting myself for any period of time from this house, is a sufficient reason to induce me not to call your lordships' attention to any subject which may appear to me to be of importance to the country. Finding that every endeavour made by myself and my friends, to oppose the misconduct of ministers, produced no utility, I had in common with my friends thought proper to retire. At that time, however, I stated, that if ever

I thought I could be of any service to the publick, I would come forward. When the assessed tax bill was brought before your lordships, I did come forward, and endeavoured to point out what I conceived were likely to be its pernicious effects, but without success. When the expedients to which the minister is driven for raising money prove that we are near the end of our resources, surely you cannot be so improvident as to commit their application to the same hands by which they have hitherto been so uselessly squandered.

There is another subject to which my attention is naturally drawn, in touching upon the present topick. After the severe punishment which has to night been inflicted upon the proprietor and printer of a newspaper, * it may not be unfair to complain of the foul calumnies which are heaped by the *underlings*, or, I know not what to call them, of government, upon every man who opposes the measures of administration. The basest aspersions and the most scandalous insinuations, are lavished upon all who venture to dissent from the measures or opinion of ministers. Such indeed is the quantity of this abuse, that it seems as if those who employ it considered themselves too scantily paid by their superiours, and endeavoured to make up for it by currying favour with their readers by the grossness of their falsehoods and scurrilities. We have been charged with inflaming the people by our speeches against the government, and with being hostile to the true principles of the constitution. It may be said that we ought not to regard these calumnies, and ought to persevere in doing our duty. It becomes a question, however, what is our duty. Such despicable calumnies certainly ought to be treated with contempt. If, however, instead of resisting the encroachments of the minister, our attendance has no other effect but to sanction his abuses, and teach the people to believe that they have no alternative but to choose between the present ministers and those

* The Morning Chronicle.

with whom I act, I should consider that attendance as not only nugatory but mischievous. If such, however, be the alternative which ministers choose to hold out, it becomes our duty to prove that the calumny is ill founded. By withdrawing the attention of the country from us, and fixing it upon ministers, we are desirous that they should reflect that no evil can be greater than the continuance of the present ministers in office. Then they will find men able to conduct their affairs, men fitted to conciliate Ireland, to obtain peace, men in whom the French will have no title to think concession is weakness. When we hold a reform in parliament to be necessary, we know that this measure is unfavourably received by the majority. We are convinced, however, that without this the country can never be placed upon a good footing. We stand pledged to take no share in any administration, in which this is not a leading object. In saying this, I am ready to confess that there are some measures which appear to me to be more immediately necessary than parliamentary reform—a peace with France, the conciliation of Ireland, with the question of catholick emancipation, and parliamentary reform in that country. While I admit this, however, I hold a parliamentary reform is a leading object. This I say merely in answer to the charge of being a candidate for office, for I should be ashamed to talk of myself as fit for any office in any other view. Upon this subject I likewise declare that the specifick plan proposed last year in another place has my concurrence. I will say further, that without a peace with France, without conciliation with Ireland, parliamentary reform can be of no advantage to the country; while the latter is necessary to secure and to improve the benefits of the former. There may be men of talents and integrity perfectly well qualified for the first offices of the state who would not consider parliamentary reform as a necessary ingredient in their system. Such men I should congratulate upon their boldness in undertaking the conduct of publick affairs upon such terms. So long, however, as they acted for

the publick advantage, th
though I should reserve to
ing forward the question o
whenever the proper moment a

But the calumniators to which
satisfied with these charges, have al
ate, that I am not averse to the succe
in their designs against this country.
spise the authors of these attacks I think
to repel calumnies so gross. I cannot help
ing it as a disadvantage to this country to ho
the enemy that on landing here they would fin
porters. Yet such are the falsehoods which t
calumniators assert, such are the means by whi
they encourage the French to make the attempt. After they have by their own lies induced the enemy to judge unfavourably of the temper of many people here, they turn round and impute the blame of encouragement to those against whom they forge the original calumny, and ascribe to us those impressions of the enemy which they have occasioned. But in case of invasion, who would be the men from whom the directory might flatter themselves with assistance! Would it not be from those mean sycophants of power who follow every change, who have alternately been the creatures of every one in authority, and whose loyalty

> Is the blind instinct that crouches to the rod,
> And licks the foot that treads it in the dust!

Every man in the country must know that if the French were to succeed we should be the most degraded and absolute slaves that ever existed. No man can believe that those who oppose administration could for a moment abet the designs of an invading enemy. What then can we think of ministers, when we see them encouraging these base calumnies? What shall we think, when we see them holding out a person whom no man could suspect of disloyalty to his sovereign, or treachery to his country, as unfit to be trusted with arms for their defence. Of this subject, however, it would be irregular to say more on the

present occasion, as it would more naturally form a separate consideration. Yet such calumnies as this did the creatures of ministers industriously propagate, and I mention them only to show that no man can take any share in opposition to the measures of administration, without being in this manner stigmatized. For my own part, though I never shall contribute to preserve his majesty's present ministers in office, I will exert every effort in repelling invasion from our coasts. I shall wait only my sovereign's command to take arms to defend my country, anxious to mingle in the hottest of the battle. Though I conceive there can be no more decided enemy to his king and country than the present minister, I should suspend all difference of opinion till the hostile attack was repelled. Then, however, I should return with the same abhorrence of his principles and detestation of his conduct, and vow eternal enmity to his system. I vow eternal hatred to the system on which they act. Were I ever to join them, may the just indignation of my country pursue me to the grave, may I be execrated by all mankind, and may the Great Creator of all things shower down his curses on my apostate head!

MR. M'INTOSH'S SPEECH,

IN DEFENCE OF MONSIEUR PELTIER, IN A TRIAL FOR A LIBEL AGAINST BUONAPARTE, FIRST CONSUL OF THE FRENCH REPUBLICK, AT THE COURT OF KING'S BENCH, ON THE 21ST OF FEBRUARY, 1803.

DURING the late temporary suspension of hostilities in which a weak, and irresolute ministry permitted the British nation to be unwarily seduced by the stratagems of an artful and perfidious enemy, there arose out of the pacifick relations thus established, one of the most memorable and interesting trials which was ever agitated in Westminster Hall.

The parties in this case were on the one side the Chief Magistrate of the *French Republick*, and on the other a stanch and virtuous *Royalist*, who was exiled and proscribed.

At an early stage of the dreadful revolution which scourged and desolated France, M. Peltier, the defendant, discerning in its principles and tendencies every thing that was abhorrent to his dearest attachments, and most sacred duties, sought an asylum in a foreign land.

To England, whither he fled, he brought all that remained to him of his wrecked fortune, an unsullied honour, the splendid endowments of intellect, and an honest, faithful, and ardent devotion to a righteous cause.

While the eventful contest continued, he with unwearied perseverance appropriated his admirable lite-

rary talents to the service in which he was embarked. Written in an animated, brilliant, and exhortative style, his various literary productions were widely circulated, and eagerly read. Throughout Europe they had confessedly a very salutary effect in arousing the supine, fixing the wavering, and encouraging the stedfast. When the *Truce* of Amiens took place, he drooped in despair, and remitted his exertions. But, after a short interval, gathering hope from the troubled aspects which Europe exhibited, he renovated his zeal, and once more put on his armour to resist the implacable foe of "Europe's peace, and Europe's happiness."

To facilitate the diffusion of his writings, he established a weekly paper under the title of *l'Ambigu.**

Leaving the task of graver reasoning, and more formal political disquisition to others, he resorted in his journal to weapons of attack, which, if of less weight, were, perhaps, equally felt. With the sallies of wit, and the points of epigram, the shafts of ridicule, and the causticity of sarcasm he very successfully exposed, derided, and contemned, as they successively appeared, the multifarious incidents of the tragi-comedy which, was then rehearsing before the eyes of the world, by an insolent upstart, and an audacious usurper.

Determined, at once to suffocate the voice of the press, his Consular Majesty instructed M. Otto, his diplomatick representative at the court of St James, to demand, in his name, the punishment of the editor of *l'Ambigu*. The matter indicated as particularly offensive, was several articles contained in the initial numbers of the journal, which were alleged to be covertly designed to instigate to the assassination of the chief of the French Republick.

This application being most unaccountably complied with by the British ministry, a prosecution was

* A title adopted in reference to the ambiguity of the conduct of the French government, at this period, which the editor professed to uncover and expose.

accordingly instituted against M. Peltier, for a "*Libel on Buonaparte, the first consul of the French Republick,* and still more unaccountably, a *British jury* found the defendant guilty.

But though M. Peltier had to encounter the mortification of a disgraceful verdict, he escaped the penalty which it authorized. Before he was called up to receive the judgment of the court, the war broke out between the two countries, which stopt all further proceedings against him.

We cannot help considering both the prosecution, and the verdict, as unworthy of the stern and proud character which has ever attached itself to the English nation. "They were mean attempts to conciliate the favour of a sanguinary upstart; a haughty, ferocious, and tyrannical usurper, whose rooted hatred to England, was at the period of the prosecution, known by many, and despised by all. Dispassionate reason smiles at the idea of *vilifying* and defaming the character of Napoleon Buonaparte, that spotless, and immaculate character which the breath of slander never yet dared to taint!

It is painful to an honest mind to reflect, that political motives, or any motives, could influence a great nation to suppress, by the terrours of the law, the indignant feelings of virtue and probity, excited by the contemplation of the most atrocious deeds that ever disgraced, that ever sullied the human character. The first step towards slavery and vice is the impunity of guilt. When the preventive checks are removed, virtue must fall, and patriotism will be buried under the ruins of justice. There should be a moral tribunal, before which the greatest potentates ought to be amenable. That moral tribunal is the opinion of the world, the opinion of civilized society. The force that should drag man thither is the *press*, a kind of universal judicature, where every one arraigns his superiours, and interrogates them; where every one pronounces upon the guilt, the infamy, and the disgrace; or upon the innocence, the virtue, and the

honour of his masters. The first step towards undermining that judicature, and of precipitating it into ruin, is the restraining the honest emotions of indignant virtue; restraining man from telling his superiours, whoever they may be, that they *are* tyrants or murderers! Can truth, or ought truth, ever to be a *libel?* Shall we break down the distinctive barriers between virtue and vice? Forbid it, Heaven! forbid it, man! VERITATIS *simplex oratio est.*"

The speech of Mr. M'Intosh, on this occasion, has been very justly admired. It is, indeed, entitled to the highest praise. In point of energy and comprehension, of that luminous connexion of the whole series of illustrative and argumentative parts, their close bearings upon the immediate object of discussion, and that glowing language which unites all the sublime images of poetry with the cool deductions of dialectick accuracy, we really think this defence of Mr. M'Intosh to be superiour to any effort of *forensick* eloquence, which ancient or modern times can furnish.

SPEECH, &c.

GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY,

THE time is now come for me to address you on behalf of the unfortunate gentleman who is the defendant on this record.

I must begin with observing, that though I know myself too well to ascribe to any thing but to the kindness and good nature of my learned friend the attorney general, the unmerited praises which he has been pleased to bestow on me, yet I will venture to say, he has done me no more than justice in supposing that in this place, and on this occasion, where I exercise the functions of an inferiour minister of justice, an inferiour minister indeed, but a minister of justice still, I am incapable of lending myself to the passions of any client, and that I will not make the

proceedings of this court subservient to any political purpose.

Whatever is respected by the laws and government of my country shall, in this place, be respected by me. In considering matters that deeply interest the quiet, the safety, and the liberty of all mankind, it is impossible for me not to feel warmly and strongly; but I shall make an effort to control my feelings however painful that effort may be, and where I cannot speak out, but at the risk of offending either sincerity or prudence, I shall labour to contain myself and be silent.

I cannot but feel, gentlemen, how much I stand in need of your favourable attention and indulgence. The charge which I have to defend is surrounded with the most invidious topicks of discussion; but they are not of my seeking. The case and the topicks which are inseparable from it, are brought here by the prosecutor.

Here I find them, and here it is my duty to deal with them, as the interests of Mr. Peltier seem to me to require. He, by his choice and confidence, has cast on me a very arduous duty, which I could not decline, and which I can still less betray. He has a right to expect from me, a faithful, a zealous, and a fearless defence; and this his just expectation, according to the measure of my humble abilities shall be fulfilled. I have said a fearless defence. Perhaps that word was unnecessary in the place where I now stand. Intrepidity in the discharge of professional duty is so common a quality at the English bar, that it has, thank God, long ceased to be a matter of boast or praise. If it had been otherwise, gentlemen, if the bar could have been silenced or overawed by power, I may presume to say, that an English jury would not this day have been met to administer justice. Perhaps I need scarce say that my defence *shall* be fearless, in a place where fear never entered any heart but that of a criminal. But you will pardon me for having said so much, when you consider who the real parties before you are.

Gentlemen, the real prosecutor is the master of the greatest empire the civilized world ever saw. The defendant is a defenceless proscribed exile. He is a French royalist, who fled from his country in the autumn of 1792 at the period of that memorable and awful emigration when all the proprietors and magistrates of the greatest civilized country of Europe were driven from their homes by the daggers of assassins; when our shores were covered, as with the wreck of a great tempest, with old men, and women, and children, and ministers of religion, who fled from the ferocity of their countrymen as before an army of invading barbarians.

The greatest part of these unfortunate exiles, of those I mean who have been spared by the sword, who have survived the effect of pestilential climates or broken hearts, have been since permitted to revisit their country. Though despoiled of their all, they have eagerly embraced even the sad privilege of being suffered to die in their native land.

Even this miserable indulgence was to be purchased by compliances, by declarations of allegiance to the new government, which some of these suffering royalists deemed incompatible with their consciences, with their dearest attachments, and their most sacred duties. Among these last is M. Peltier. I do not presume to blame those who submitted, and I trust you will not judge harshly of those who refused. You will not think unfavourably of a man who stands before you as the voluntary victim of his loyalty and honour. If a revolution (which God avert) were to drive us into exile, and to cast us on a foreign shore, we should expect, at least, to be pardoned by generous men, for stubborn loyalty, and unseasonable fidelity to the laws and government of our fathers.

This unfortunate gentleman had devoted a great part of his life to literature. It was the amusement and ornament of his better days. Since his own ruin, and the desolation of his country, he has been compelled to employ it as a means of support. For the

last ten years he has been engaged in a variety of publications of considerable importance; but, since the peace, he has desisted from serious political discussion, and confined himself to the obscure Journal which is now before you; the least calculated, surely, of any publication that ever issued from the press, to rouse the alarms of the most jealous government; which will not be read in England, because it is not written in our language; which cannot be read in France, because its entry into that country is prohibited by a power whose mandates are not very supinely enforced, nor often evaded with impunity; which can have no other object than that of amusing the companions of the author's principles and misfortunes, by pleasantries and sarcasms on their victorious enemies. There is, indeed, gentlemen, one remarkable circumstance in this unfortunate publication: it is the only, or almost the only, journal, which still dares to espouse the cause of that royal and illustrious family, which but fourteen years ago was flattered by every press, and guarded by every tribunal in Europe. Even the court in which we are met affords an example of the vicissitudes of their fortune. My learned friend has reminded you, that the last prosecution tried in this place, at the instance of a French government, was for a libel on that magnanimous princess, who has since been butchered in sight of her palace.

I do not make these observations with any purpose of questioning the general principles which have been laid down by my learned friend. I must admit his right to bring before you those who libel any government recognised by his majesty, and at peace with the British empire. I admit that whether such a government be of yesterday, or a thousand years old, whether it be a crude and bloody usurpation, or the most ancient, just, and paternal authority upon earth, we are *here* equally bound by his majesty's recognition to protect it against libellous attacks. I admit that if, during our usurpation, Lord Clarendon had published his history at Paris, or the Marquis of Montrose his

verses on the murder of his sovereign, or Mr. Cowley his Discourse on Cromwell's government, and if the English ambassadour had complained, the Président de Molí, or any other of the great magistrates who then adorned the parliament of Paris, however reluctantly, painfully, and indignantly, might have been compelled to have condemned these illustrious men to the punishment of libellers. I say this only for the sake of bespeaking a favourable attention from your generosity and compassion to what will be feebly urged in behalf of my unfortunate client, who has sacrificed his fortune, his hopes, his connexions, his country to his conscience; who seems marked out for destruction in this his last asylum.

That he still enjoys the security of this asylum, that he has not been sacrificed to the resentment of his powerful enemies, is perhaps owing to the firmness of the king's government. If that be the fact, gentlemen; if his majesty's ministers have resisted applications to expel this unfortunate gentleman from England, I should publickly thank them for their firmness, if it were not unseemly and improper to suppose that they could have acted otherwise—to thank an English government for not violating the most sacred duties of hospitality; for not bringing indelible disgrace on their country.

But be that as it may, gentlemen, he now comes before you, perfectly satisfied that an English jury is the most refreshing prospect that the eye of accused innocence ever met in a human tribunal; and he feels with me the most fervent gratitude to the Protector of empires that, surrounded as we are with the ruins of principalities and powers, we still continue to meet together, after the manner of our fathers, to administer justice in this her ancient sanctuary.

There is another point of view in which this case seems to me to merit your most serious attention. I consider it as the first of a long series of conflicts between the greatest power in the world, and the only free press remaining in Europe. No man living is

more thoroughly convinced than I am, that my learned friend, Mr. Attorney General, will never degrade his excellent character; that he will never disgrace his high magistracy by mean compliances, by an immoderate and unconscientious exercise of power; yet I am convinced by circumstances which I shall now abstain from discussing, that I am to consider this as the first of a long series of conflicts, between the greatest power in the world, and the only free press now remaining in Europe. Gentlemen, this distinction of the English press is new; it is a proud and melanly distinction. Before the great earthquake of the French revolution had swallowed up all the asylums of free discussion on the continent, we enjoyed that privilege, indeed, more fully than others; but we did not enjoy it exclusively. In great monarchies the press has always been considered as too formidable an engine to be entrusted to unlicensed individuals. But in other continental countries, either by the laws of the state, or by long habits of liberality and toleration in magistrates, a liberty of discussion has been enjoyed, perhaps sufficient for most useful purposes. It existed, in fact, where it was not protected by law; and the wise and generous connivance of governments was daily more and more secured by the growing civilisation of their subjects. In Holland, in Switzerland, in the imperial towns of Germany, the press was either legally or practically free. Holland and Switzerland are no more; and since the commencement of this prosecution, fifty imperial towns have been erased from the list of independent states, by one dash of the pen. Three or four still preserve a precarious and trembling existence. I will not say by what compliances they must purchase its continuance. I will not insult the feebleness of states whose unmerited fall I do most bitterly deplore.

These governments were in many respects one of the most interesting parts of the ancient system of Europe. Unfortunately for the repose of mankind, great states are compelled, by regard to their own safety, to consider the military spirit and martial

habits of their people as one of the main objects of their policy. Frequent hostilities seem almost the necessary condition of their greatness; and, without being great, they cannot long remain safe. Smaller states exempted from this cruel necessity; a hard condition of greatness, a bitter satire on human nature; devoted themselves to the arts of peace, to the cultivation of literature, and the improvement of reason. They became places of refuge for free and fearless discussion; they were the impartial spectators and judges of the various contests of ambition, which from time to time disturbed the quiet of the world. They thus became peculiarly qualified to be the organs of that publick opinion which converted Europe into a great republick, with laws which mitigated, though they could not extinguish ambition; and with moral tribunals to which even the most despotick sovereigns were amenable. If wars of aggrandizement were undertaken, their authors were arraigned in the face of Europe. If acts of internal tyranny were perpetrated, they resounded from a thousand presses throughout all civilized countries. Princes on whose will there were no legal checks, thus found a moral restraint which the most powerful of them could not brave with absolute impunity. They acted before a vast audience, to whose applause or condemnation they could not be utterly indifferent. The very constitution of human nature, the unalterable laws of the mind of man, against which all rebellion is fruitless, subjected the proudest tyrants to this control. No elevation of power, no depravity, however consummate, no innocence, however spotless, can render man wholly independent of the praise or blame of his fellow men.

These governments were in other respects one of the most beautiful and interesting parts of our ancient system. The perfect security of such inconsiderable and feeble states, their undisturbed tranquillity, amidst the wars and conquests that surrounded them, attested beyond any other part of the European system, the moderation, the justice, the civilisation to which

Christian Europe had reached in modern times. Their weakness was protected only by the habitual reverence for justice, which during a long series of ages, had grown up in Christendom. This was the only fortification which defended them against those mighty monarchs to whom they offered so easy a prey. And till the French revolution this was sufficient. Consider, for instance, the situation of the republick of Geneva. Think of her defenceless position in the very jaws of France; but think also of her undisturbed security, of her profound quiet, of the brilliant success with which she applied to industry and literature, while Louis XIV was pouring his myriads into Italy before her gates. Call to mind, if ages crowded into years have not effaced them from your memory, that happy period when we scarcely dreamt more of the subjugation of the feeblest republick of Europe, than of the conquest of her mightiest empire, and tell me if you can imagine a spectacle more beautiful to the moral eye, or a more striking proof of progress in the noblest principles of true civilisation.

These feeble states, these monuments of the justice of Europe, the asylum of peace, of industry, and of literature, the organs of publick reason, the refuge of oppressed innocence and persecuted truth, have perished with those ancient principles which were their sole guardians and protectors. They have been swallowed up by that fearful convulsion, which has shaken the uttermost corners of the earth. They are destroyed and gone for ever.

One asylum of free discussion is still inviolate. There is still one spot in Europe where man can freely exercise his reason on the most important concerns of society, where he can boldly publish his judgment on the acts of the proudest and most powerful tyrants. The press of England is still free. It is guarded by the free constitution of our forefathers. It is guarded by the hearts and arms of Englishmen, and I trust I may venture to say, that if it be to fall, it will fall only under the ruins of the British empire.

It is an awful consideration, gentlemen. Every other monument of European liberty has perished. That ancient fabrick which has been gradually reared by the wisdom and virtue of our fathers still stands—It stands, thanks be to God! solid and entire—but it stands alone, and it stands amidst ruins.

In these extraordinary circumstances, I repeat that I must consider this as the first of a long series of conflicts between the greatest power in the world and the only free press remaining in Europe. And I trust that you will consider yourselves as the advanced guard of liberty, as having this day to fight the first battle of free discussion against the most formidable enemy that it ever encountered. You will therefore excuse me, if on so important an occasion I remind you, at more length than is usual, of those general principles of law and policy on this subject, which have been handed down to us by our ancestors.

Those who slowly built up the fabrick of our laws, never attempted any thing so absurd as to define by any precise rule the obscure and shifting boundaries which divide libel from history or discussion. It is a subject which, from its nature admits neither rules nor definitions. The same words may be perfectly innocent in one case, and most mischievous and libellous in another. A change of circumstances, often apparently slight, is sufficient to make the whole difference. These changes which may be as numerous, as the variety of human intentions and conditions, can never be foreseen nor comprehended under any legal definitions, and the framers of our law have never attempted to subject them to such definitions. They left such ridiculous attempts to those who call themselves philosophers, but who have, in fact, proved themselves most grossly and stupidly ignorant of that philosophy which is conversant with human affairs.

The principles of the law of England on the subject of political libel are few and simple, and they are necessarily so broad, that, without a habitually mild administration of justice, they might encroach mate-

rially on the liberty of political discussion. Every publication which is intended to vilify either our own government, or the government of any foreign state in amity with this kingdom, is, by the law of England, a libel. To protect political discussion from the danger to which it would be exposed by these wide principles, if they were severely and literally enforced, our ancestors trusted to various securities; some growing out of the law and constitution, and others arising from the character of those publick officers whom the constitution had formed, and to whom its administration is committed. They trusted in the first place to the moderation of the legal officers of the crown, educated in the maxims and imbued with the spirit of a free government; controlled by the superintending power of parliament, and peculiarly watched in all political prosecutions by the reasonable and wholesome jealousy of their fellow subjects. And I am bound to admit, that since the glorious era of the revolution, making due allowance for the frailties, the faults, and the occasional vices of men, they have, upon the whole, not been disappointed. I know that in the hands of my learned friend, that trust will never be abused. But, above all, they confided in the moderation and good sense of juries, popular in their origin, popular in their feelings, popular in their very prejudices, taken from the mass of the people and immediately returning to that mass again. By these checks and temperaments they hoped that they should sufficiently repress malignant libels, without endangering that freedom of inquiry which is the first security of a free state. They knew that the offence of a political libel is of a very peculiar nature, and differing in the most important particulars from all other crimes. In all other cases the most severe execution of law can only spread terrour among the guilty; but in political libels it inspires even the innocent with fear. This striking peculiarity arises from the same circumstances which make it impossible to define the limits of libel and innocent discussion; which make it impossible for a man of the purest and most honour-

able mind, to be always perfectly certain, whether he be within the territory of fair argument and honest narrative, or whether he may not have unwittingly overstepped the faint and varying line which bounds them. But, gentlemen, I will go further. This is the only offence where severe and frequent punishments not only intimidate the innocent, but deter men from the most meritorious acts, and from rendering the most important services to their country. They indispose and disqualify men for the discharge of the most sacred duties which they owe to mankind. To inform the publick on the conduct of those who administer publick affairs, requires courage and conscious security. It is always an invidious and obnoxious office; but it is often the most necessary of all publick duties. If it is not done boldly, it cannot be done effectually, and it is not from writers trembling under the uplifted scourge, that we are to hope for it.

There are other matters, gentlemen, to which I am desirous of particularly calling your attention. These are the circumstances in the condition of this country, which have induced our ancestors, at all times, to handle, with more than ordinary tenderness, that branch of the liberty of discussion which is applied to the conduct of foreign states. The relation of this kingdom to the commonwealth of Europe, is so peculiar, that no history, I think, furnishes a parallel to it. From the moment in which we abandoned all projects of continental aggrandisement, we could have no interest respecting the state of the continent, but the interests of national safety, and of commercial prosperity. The paramount interest of every state, that which comprehends every other is *security*. And the security of Great Britain requires nothing on the continent but the uniform observance of justice. It requires nothing but the inviolability of ancient boundaries, and the sacredness of ancient possessions, which, on these subjects, is but another form of words for justice. A nation which is herself shut out from the possibility of continental aggran-

dizement, can have no interest but that of preventing such aggrandizement in others. We can have no interest of safety but the preventing of those encroachments, which, by their immediate effects, or by their example may be dangerous to ourselves. We can have no interest of ambition respecting the continent. So that neither our real, nor even our apparent interests can ever be at variance with justice.

As to commercial prosperity, it is, indeed, a secondary, but it is still a very important branch of our national interests, and it requires nothing on the continent of Europe, but the *maintenance of peace*, as far as the paramount interest of security will allow.

Whatever ignorant or prejudiced men may affirm, no war was ever gainful to a commercial nation. Losses may be less in some, and incidental profits may arise in others. But no such profits ever formed an adequate compensation for the waste of capital and industry which all wars must produce. Next to peace, our commercial greatness depends chiefly on the affluence and prosperity of our neighbours. A commercial nation has, indeed, the same interest in the wealth of her neighbours, that a tradesman has in the wealth of his customers. The prosperity of England has been chiefly owing to the general progress of civilized nations in the arts and improvements of social life. Not an acre of land has been brought into cultivation in the wilds of Siberia, or on the shores of the Mississippi which has not widened the market for English industry. It is nourished by the progressive prosperity of the world, and it amply repays all that it has received. It can only be employed in spreading civilisation and enjoyment over the earth, and by the unchangeable laws of nature, in spite of the impotent tricks of government, it is now partly applied to revive the industry of those very nations who are the loudest in their senseless clamours against its pretended mischiefs. If the blind and barbarous project of destroying English prosperity could be accomplished, it could have no other effect, than that of

completely beggaring the very countries who now stupidly ascribe their own poverty to our wealth.

Under these circumstances, gentlemen, it became the obvious policy of the kingdom, a policy in unison with the maxims of a free government, to consider with great indulgence even the boldest animadversions of our political writers, on the ambitious projects of foreign states.

Bold, and sometimes indiscreet, as these animadversions might be, they had at least the effect of warning the people of their danger, and of rousing the national indignation against those encroachments, which England has almost always been compelled in the end to resist by arms. Seldom, indeed, has she been allowed to wait, till a provident regard to her own safety should compel her to take up arms in defence of others. For as it was said by a great orator of antiquity, that no man ever was the enemy of the republick who had not first declared war against him, so I may say, with truth, that no man ever meditated the subjugation of Europe, who did not consider the destruction, or the corruption of England as the first condition of his success. If you examine history you will find that no such project was ever formed in which it was not deemed a necessary preliminary, either to detach England from the common cause, or to destroy her. It seems as if all the conspirators against the independence of nations, might have sufficiently taught other states that England is their natural guardian and protector; that she alone has no interest but their preservation; that her safety is interwoven with their own. When vast projects of aggrandisement are manifested, when schemes of criminal ambition are carried into effect, the day of battle is fast approaching for England. Her free government cannot engage in dangerous wars, without the hearty and affectionate support of her people. A state thus situated cannot without the utmost peril, silence those publick discussions, which are to point the popular indignation against those who must soon be enemies. In domestick dissensions, it may some-

times be the supposed interest of government to overawe the press. But it never can be even their apparent interest when the danger is purely foreign. A king of England who, in such circumstances, should conspire against the free press of this country, would undermine the foundations of his own throne; he would silence the trumpet which is to call his people round his standard.

Our ancestors never thought it their policy to avert the resentment of foreign tyrants, by enjoining English writers to contain and repress their just abhorrence of the criminal enterprises of ambition. This great and gallant nation, which has fought in the front of every battle against the oppressors of Europe, has sometimes inspired fear, but, thank God, she has never felt it. We know that they are our real, and must soon become our declared, foes. We know that there can be no cordial amity between the natural enemies and the independence of nations. We have never adopted the cowardly and short-sighted policy of silencing our press, of breaking the spirit and palsying the hearts of our people, for the sake of a hollow and precarious truce. We have never been base enough to purchase a short respite from hostilities, by sacrificing the first means of defence; the means of rousing the publick spirit of the people, and directing it against the enemies of their country and of Europe.

Gentlemen, the publick spirit of a people, by which I mean the whole body of those affections which unites men's hearts to the commonwealth, is in various countries composed of various elements, and depends on a great variety of causes. In this country, I may venture to say, that it mainly depends on the vigour of the popular parts and principles of our government; and that the spirit of liberty is one of its most important elements. Perhaps it may depend less on those advantages of a free government, which are most highly estimated by calm reason, than upon those parts of it which delight the imagination, and flatter the just and natural pride of mankind. Among these

we are certainly not to forget the political rights which are not uniformly withheld from the lowest classes, and the continual appeal made to them, in publick discussion, upon the greatest interests of the state. These are undoubtedly among the circumstances which endear to Englishmen their government and their country, and animate their zeal for that glorious institution which confers on the meanest of them a sort of distinction and nobility unknown to the most illustrious slaves, who tremble at the frown of a tyrant. Whoever were unwarily and rashly to abolish or narrow these privileges, which it must be owned are liable to great abuse, and to very specious objections, might perhaps discover, too late, that he had been dismantling his country. Of whatever elements publick spirit is composed, it is always and every where the chief defensive principle of a state. It is perfectly distinct from courage. Perhaps no nation, certainly no European nation, ever perished from an inferiority of courage. And undoubtedly no considerable nation was ever subdued, in which the publick affections were sound and vigorous. It is publick spirit which binds together the dispersed courage of individuals and fastens it to the commonwealth. It is, therefore, as I have said, the chief defensive principle of every country. Of all the stimulants which rouse it into action, the most powerful among us is certainly the press; and it cannot be restrained or weakened without imminent danger, that the national spirit may languish, and that the people may act with less zeal and affection for their country in the hour of its danger.

These principles, gentlemen, are not new—they are genuine old English principles. And though in our days they have been disgraced and abused by ruffians and fanaticks, they are in themselves as just and sound as they are liberal; and they are the only principles on which a free state can be safely governed. These principles I have adopted since I first learnt the use of reason, and I think I shall abandon them only with life.

On these principles I am now to call your attention to the libel with which this unfortunate gentleman is charged. I heartily rejoice that I concur with the greatest part of what has been said by my learned friend, Mr. Attorney General, who has done honour even to his character by the generous and liberal principles which he has laid down. He has told you that he does not mean to attack *historical narrative*. He has told you that he does not mean to attack *political discussion*. He has told you also that he does not consider every intemperate word into which a writer, fairly engaged in narration or reasoning, might be betrayed, as a fit subject for prosecution. The essence of the crime of libel consists in the malignant mind which the publication proves and from which it flows. A jury must be convinced, before they find a man guilty of libel, that his intention was to libel, not to state facts which he believed to be true, or reasonings which he thought just. My learned friend has told you that the liberty of history includes the right of publishing those observations which occur to intelligent men when they consider the affairs of the world, and I think he will not deny that it includes also the right of expressing those sentiments which all good men feel on the contemplation of extraordinary examples of depravity or excellence.

One more privilege of the historian, which the attorney general has not named, but to which his principles extend, it is now my duty to claim on behalf of my client; I mean the right of *republishing, historically,*, those documents, whatever their original malignity may be, which display the character and unfold the intentions of governments, or factions, or individuals. I think my learned friend will not deny, that a historical compiler may innocently republish in England the most insolent and outrageous declaration of war ever published against his majesty by a foreign government. The intention of the original author was to vilify and degrade his majesty's government; but the intention of the compiler is only to gratify curiosity, or

perhaps to rouse just indignation against the calumniator whose production he republishes.—His intention is not libellous—his republication is therefore not a libel. Suppose this to be the case with Mr. Peltier. Suppose him to have republished libels with a merely historical intention. In that case it cannot be pretended that he is more a libeller than my learned friend Mr. Abbott, who read these supposed libels to you when he opened the pleadings. Mr. Abbott republished them to you, that you might know and judge of them—Mr. Peltier, on the supposition I have made, also republished them that the publick might know and judge of them.

You already know that the general plan of Mr. Peltier's publication was to give a picture of the cabals and intrigues, of the hopes and projects of French factions. It is undoubtedly a natural and necessary part of this plan to republish all the serious and ludicrous pieces which these factions circulate against each other. The ode ascribed to Chenier or Ginguené I do really believe to have been written at Paris, to have been circulated there, to have been there attributed to some one of these writers, to have been sent to England as their work, and as such to have been republished by Mr. Peltier. But I am not sure that I have evidence to convince you of the truth of this. Suppose that I have not; will my learned friend say that my client must necessarily be convicted? I, on the contrary, contend, that it is for my learned friend to show that it is not a historical republication. Such it professes to be, and that profession it is for him to disprove. The profession may indeed be "a mask;" but it is for my friend to pluck off the mask, and expose the libeller, before he calls upon you for a verdict of guilty.

If the general lawfulness of such republications be denied, then I must ask Mr. Attorney General to account for the long impunity which English newspapers have enjoyed. I must request him to tell you

why they have been suffered to republish all the atrocious, official and unofficial libels which have been published against his majesty for the last ten years, by the Brissots, the Marats, the Dantons, the Robespierres, the Barrères, the Talliens, the Reubells, the Merlins, the Barrases, and all that long line of bloody tyrants who oppressed their own country, and insulted every other which they had not the power to rob. What must be the answer? That the English publishers were either innocent if their motive was to gratify curiosity, or praiseworthy if their intention was to rouse indignation against the calumniators of their country. If any other answer be made, I must remind my friend of a most sacred part of his duty—the duty of protecting the honest fame of those who are absent in the service of their country. Within these few days, we have seen in every newspaper in England, a publication, called the report of Colonel Sebastiani, in which a gallant British officer* is charged with writing letters to procure assassination. The publishers of that infamous report are not and will not be prosecuted, because their intention is not to libel general Stuart. On any other principle why have all our newspapers been suffered to circulate that most atrocious of all libels against the king and people of England, which purports to be translated from the Moniteur of the 9th of August, 1802; a libel against a prince who has passed through a factious and stormy reign of forty-three years, without a single imputation on his personal character; against a people who have passed through the severest trials of national virtue with unimpaired glory, who alone in the world can boast of mutinies without murder, of triumphant mobs without massacre, of bloodless revolutions and of civil wars unstained by a single assassination. That most impudent and malignant libel, which charges such a king of such a people not only with having hired assassins, but with being so shameless, so lost to all sense of character, as to have be-

* General Stuart.

stowed on these assassins, if their murderous projects had succeeded, the highest badges of publick honour, the rewards reserved for statesmen and heroes, the order of the garter; the order which was founded by the heroes of Cressy and Poictiers; the garter which was worn by Henry the Great, and by Gustavus Adolphus, which might now be worn by the hero, who on the shores of Syria, the ancient theatre of English chivalry, has revived the renown of English valour and of English humanity; that unsullied garter, which a detestable libeller dares to say is to be paid as the price of murder.

If I had now to defend an English publisher for the republication of that abominable libel, what must I have said in his defence? I must have told you that it was originally published by the French government in their official gazette; that it was republished by the English editor to gratify the natural curiosity, perhaps to rouse the just resentment of his English readers. I should have contended, and, I trust, with success, that his republication of a libel was not libellous; that it was lawful, that it was laudable. All that would be important, at least all that would be essential in such a defence, I now state to you on behalf of Mr. Peltier; and if an English newspaper may safely republish the libels of the French government against his majesty, I shall leave you to judge whether Mr. Peltier, in similar circumstances, may not with equal safety, republish the libels of Chenier against the first consul. On the one hand you have the assurances of Mr. Peltier in the context that this ode is merely a republication—you have also the general plan of his work with which such a republication is perfectly consistent. On the other hand, you have only the suspicions of Mr. Attorney General that this ode is an original production of the defendant.

But supposing that you should think it his production, and that you should also think it a libel—even in that event, which I cannot anticipate, I am

not left without a defence. The question will still be open. "Is it a libel on Buonaparte, or is it a libel on Chenier or Ginguené" This is not an information for a libel on Chenier; and if you should think that this ode was produced by Mr. Peltier, and ascribed by him to Chenier for the sake of covering that writer with the odium of jacobinism, the defendant is entitled to your verdict of not guilty. Or if you should believe that it is ascribed to jacobinical writers for the sake of satirizing a French jacobinical faction, you must also in that case acquit him. Butler puts seditious and immoral language into the mouth of rebels and fanaticks; but Hudibras is not for that reason a libel on morality or government. Swift, in the most exquisite piece of irony in the world (his argument against the abolition of Christianity) uses the language of those shallow, atheistical coxcombs whom his satire was intended to scourge. The scheme of his irony required some levity and even some profaneness of language. But nobody was ever so dull as to doubt whether Swift meant to satirize atheism or religion. In the same manner Mr. Peltier, when he wrote a satire on French jacobinism, was compelled to ascribe to jacobins a jacobinical hatred of government. He was obliged by dramatick propriety, to put into their mouths those anarchical maxims which are complained of in his ode. But it will be said, these incitements to insurrection are here directed against the authority of Buonaparte. This proves nothing, because they must have been so directed, if the ode were a satire on jacobinism. French jacobins must inveigh against Buonaparte, because he exercises the powers of government. The satirist who attacks them must transcribe their sentiments, and adopt their language.

I do not mean to say, gentlemen, that Mr. Peltier feels any affection, or professes any allegiance to Buonaparte. If I were to say so, he would disown me. He would disdain to purchase an acquittal by the profession of sentiments which he disclaims and abhors. Not to love Buonaparte is no crime. The

question is not whether Mr. Peltier loves or hates the first consul, but whether he has put revolutionary language into the mouth of jacobins, with a view to paint their incorrigible turbulence, and to exhibit the fruits of jacobinical revolutions to the detestation of mankind.

Now, gentlemen, we cannot give a probable answer to this question without previously examining two or three questions on which the answer to the first must very much depend. Is there a faction in France which breathes the spirit, and is likely to employ the language of this ode? Does it perfectly accord with their character and views? Is it utterly irreconcilable with the feelings, opinions, and wishes of Mr. Peltier? If these questions can be answered in the affirmative, then I think you must agree with me, that Mr. Peltier does not in this ode speak his own sentiments, that he does not here vent his own resentment against Buonaparte; but that he personates a jacobin, and adopts his language for the sake of satirizing his principles.

These questions, gentlemen, lead me to those political discussions, which, generally speaking, are in a court of justice odious and disgusting. Here, however, they are necessary, and I shall consider them only as far as the necessities of this cause require.

Gentlemen, the French revolution—I must pause, after I have uttered words which present such an overwhelming idea.—But I have not now to engage in an enterprise so far beyond my force as that of examining and judging that tremendous revolution. I have only to consider the character of the factions which it must have left behind it.

The French revolution began with great and fatal errours. These errours produced atrocious crimes. A mild and feeble monarchy was succeeded by bloody anarchy, which very shortly gave birth to military despotism. France, in a few years, described the whole circle of human society.

All this was in the order of nature. When every principle of authority and civil discipline, when every principle which enables some men to command and disposes others to obey was extirpated from the mind by atrocious theories, and still more atrocious examples; when every old institution was trampled down with contumely, and every new institution covered in its cradle with blood; when the principle of property itself, the sheet anchor of society was annihilated; when in the persons of the new possessors, whom the poverty of language obliges us to call proprietors, it was contaminated in its source by robbery and murder, and it became separated from that education and those manners, from that general presumption of superiour knowledge and more scrupulous probity which form its only liberal titles to respect; when the people were taught to despise every thing old, and compelled to detest every thing new; there remained only one principle strong enough to hold society together, a principle utterly incompatible, indeed, with liberty, and unfriendly to civilisation itself, a tyrannical and barbarous principle; but, in that miserable condition of human affairs, a refuge from still more intolerable evils. I mean the principle of military power which gains strength from that confusion and bloodshed in which all the other elements of society are dissolved, and which, in these terrible extremities, is the cement that preserves it from total destruction.

Under such circumstances, Buonaparte usurped the supreme power in France. I say *usurped*, because an illegal assumption of power is a usurpation. But usurpation in its strongest moral sense, is scarcely applicable to a period of lawless and savage anarchy. The guilt of military usurpation, in truth, belongs to the author of those confusions which sooner or later give birth to such a usurpation.

Thus, to use the words of the historian; "by recent as well as all ancient example, it became evident that illegal violence, with whatever pretences it may be covered, and whatever object it may pursue, must

inevitably end at last in the arbitrary and despotick government of a single person."* But though the government of Buonaparte has silenced the revolutionary factions, it has not and it cannot have extinguished them. No human power could reimpress upon the minds of men all those sentiments and opinions which the sophistry and anarchy of fourteen years had obliterated. A faction must exist, which breathes the spirit of the ode now before you.

It is, I know, not the spirit of the quiet and submissive majority of the French people. They have always rather suffered, than acted in, the revolution. Completely exhausted by the calamities through which they have passed, they yield to any power which gives them repose. There is, indeed, a degree of oppression which rouses men to resistance; but there is another and a greater which wholly subdues and unmans them. It is remarkable that Robespierre himself was safe, till he attacked his own accomplices. The spirit of men of virtue was broken and there was no vigour of character left to destroy him, but in those daring ruffians who were the sharers of his tyranny.

As for the wretched populace who were made the blind and senseless instrument of so many crimes, whose frenzy can now be reviewed by a good mind with scarce any moral sentiment but that of compassion; that miserable multitude of beings, scarcely human, have already fallen into a brutish forgetfulness of the very atrocities which they themselves perpetrated. They have already forgotten all the acts of their drunken fury. If you ask one of them, who destroyed that magnificent monument of religion and art? or who perpetrated that massacre? They stupidly answer, the jacobins! though he who gives the answer was probably one of these jacobins himself; so that a traveller, ignorant of French history, might suppose the jacobins to be the name of some Tartar horde, who, after laying waste France for ten years,

* Hume's Hist. of England. vol. 7. p. 220.

were at last expelled by the native inhabitants. They have passed from senseless rage to stupid quiet. Their delirium is followed by lethargy.

In a word, gentlemen, the great body of the people of France have been severely trained in those convulsions and proscriptions which are the school of slavery. They are capable of no mutinous, and even of no bold and manly political sentiments. And if this ode professed to paint their opinions, it would be a most unfaithful picture. But it is otherwise with those who have been the actors and leaders in the scene of blood. It is otherwise with the numerous agents of the most indefatigable, searching, multiform and omnipresent tyranny that ever existed, which pervaded every class of society, which had ministers and victims in every village in France.

Some of them, indeed, the basest of the race, the sophists, the rhetors, the poet-laureats of murder, who were cruel only from cowardice, and calculating selfishness, are perfectly willing to transfer their venal pens to any government that does not disdain their infamous support. These men, republicans from servility, who published rhetorical panegyricks on massacre, and who reduced plunder to a system of ethicks, are as ready to preach slavery as anarchy. But the more daring, I had almost said, the more respectable ruffians cannot so easily bend their heads under the yoke. These fierce spirits have not lost "the unconquerable will, the study of revenge, immortal hate." They leave the luxuries of servitude to the mean and dastardly hypocrites, to the Belials and Mammons of the infernal faction. They pursue their old end of tyranny under their old pretext of liberty. The recollection of their unbounded power renders every inferiour condition irksome and vapid, and their former atrocities form, if I may so speak, a sort of moral destiny which irresistibly impels them to the perpetration of new crimes. They have no place left for penitence on earth. They labour under the most awful proscription of opinion that ever was pronounced against human beings. They have cut

down every bridge by which they could retreat into the society of men. Awakened from their dreams of democracy, the noise subsided that deafened their ears to the voice of humanity; the film fallen from their eyes which hid from them the blackness of their own deeds; haunted by the memory of their inexpiable guilt; condemned daily to look on the faces of those whom their hands made widows and orphans, they are goaded and scourged by these real furies, and hurried into the tumult of new crimes, which will drown the cries of remorse, or if they be too depraved for remorse, will silence the curses of mankind. Tyrannical power is their only refuge from the just vengeance of their fellow creatures. Murder is their only means of usurping power. They have no taste, no occupation, no pursuit but power and blood. If their hands are tied, they must at least have the luxury of murderous projects. They have drunk too deeply of human blood ever to relinquish their cannibal appetite.

Such a faction exists in France. It is numerous; it is powerful; and it has a principle of fidelity stronger than any that ever held together a society. They are banded together by despair of forgiveness, by the unanimous detestation of mankind. They are now contained by a severe and stern government. But they still meditate the renewal of insurrection and massacre; and they are prepared to renew the worst and most atrocious of their crimes, that crime against posterity and against human nature itself, that crime of which the latest generations of mankind may feel the fatal consequences—the crime of degrading and prostituting the sacred name of liberty.

I must own, that however paradoxical it may appear, I should almost think not worse, but more meanly of them if it were otherwise. I must then think them destitute of that which I will not call courage, because that is the name of a virtue; but of that ferocious energy which alone rescues ruffians from contempt. If they were destitute of that which is the heroism of murderers, they would be the lowest as well as the most abominable of beings.

It is impossible [illegible] at Louis XVI. the martyr of his cable than wretches [illegible] which scarce a man in France can over their meek and [illegible]he tone of pity and veneration; defenceless family, who [illegible]on them to change their use- geon trembling for their [illegible]n pity into generous and to death by a slow torture o[illegible]ad reproached the con- the republican and the tyranni[illegible] disgrace of being the dren, become the supple and fa[illegible]f he had brought be- government that knows how to w[illegible]ween their country a firm hand. [illegible]ource and model

I have used the word republican [illegible]and since their name by which this atrocious faction [illegible]m of huma- The assumption of that name is one of [illegible]ut their ig- They are no more republicans than royal[illegible]overeign; are the common enemies of all human societ[illegible]royalist. forbid, that by the use of that word, I should [illegible]t have posed to reflect on the members of those respe[illegible]ould republican communities which did exist in Eu[illegible]t- before the French revolution. That revolution h[illegible] spared many monarchies, but it has spared no repub- lick within the sphere of its destructive energy. One republick only now exists in the world—a republick of English blood, which was originally composed of republican societies, under the protection of a monar- chy, which had therefore no great and perilous change in their internal constitution to effect, and of which, I speak it with pleasure and pride, the inhabitants even in the convulsions of a most deplorable separa- ration, displayed the humanity as well as valour, which, I trust I may say they inherited from their forefathers.

Nor do I mean by the use of the word "republi- can," to confound this execrable faction with all those who, in the liberty of private speculation, may pre- fer a republican form of government. I own, that after much reflection, I am not able to conceive an errour more gross than that of those who believe in the possibility of erecting a republick in any of the old monarchical countries of Europe, who believe that in such countries an elective supreme magistracy

down every bridge by which the[re]
the society of men. Awaken[ed]
of democracy, the noise sub[lime]
ears to the voice of hum[anity]
their eyes which hid [the]
their own deeds; [the]
inexpiable guilt·
faces of those
orphans, t[he]
furies, .
which w[ill]
be too dep[lored]
of mankind.
fuge from [the]
tures.
power.
suit b[y]
they
jea[lousy]

[stern tyran-]
[sition which]
[betrays the]
[of the consti-]
[which has a false]
[prejudice; it is]
[the most criminal]
[easy to be inflam-]
[isocial fanaticism.]
[quiescent errour, it]
[ral disapprobation.]
[faction, falsely calling]
[rance, let us consider]
[sentiments, describes]
[their views. Trying it]
[ed, I think you will have]
[, that it is agreeable to the]
[cation, to give a historical]
[Brutuses and brutes of the]
[no assumed and disgraced the]
[who, under that name, sat as]
[tribunals with pistols in their]
[the office of the executioner on]
[unate men whom they treated as rebels,]
[sistance to Robespierre and Couthon.]

I now come to show you that this ode cannot represent the opinions of Mr. Peltier. He is a French royalist. He has devoted his talents to the cause of his king.—For that cause he has sacrificed his fortune and hazarded his life. For that cause he is proscribed and exiled from his country. I could easily conceive powerful topicks of royalist invective against Buonaparte; and if Mr. Peltier had called upon Frenchmen by the memory of St. Louis and Henry the Great, by the memory of that illustrious family which reigned over them for seven centuries, and with whom all their martial renown and literary glory are so closely connected; if he had adjured them by the

* Citizen Brutus, president of the Military Commission, at Marseilles, in January, 1794.

spotless name of that Louis XVI. the martyr of his love for his people, which scarce a man in France can now pronounce but in the tone of pity and veneration; if he had *thus* called upon them to change their useless regret and their barren pity into generous and active indignation; if he had reproached the conquerors of Europe with the disgrace of being the slaves of an upstart stranger; if he had brought before their minds the contrast between their country under her ancient monarch, the source and model of refinement in manners and taste, and since their expulsion the scourge and the opprobrium of humanity; if he had exhorted them to drive out their ignoble tyrants, and to restore their native sovereign; I should then have recognised the voice of a royalist. I should have recognised language that must have flowed from the heart of Mr. Peltier, and I should have been compelled to acknowledge that it was pointed against Buonaparte.

These, or such as these, must have been the topicks of a royalist, if he had published an invective against the first consul. But instead of these, or similar topicks, what have we in this ode? On the supposition that it is the invective of a royalist, how is it to be reconciled to common sense? What purpose is it to serve? To whom is it addressed? To what interests does it appeal? What passions is it to rouse? If it be addressed to royalists, then I request, gentlemen, that you will carefully read it, and tell me whether on that supposition, it can be any thing but the ravings of insanity, and whether a commission of lunacy be not a proceeding more fitted to the author's case, than a conviction for a libel. On that supposition I ask you whether it does not amount, in substance to such an address as the following? "Frenchmen, royalists, I do not call upon you to avenge the murder of your innocent sovereign, the butchery of your relations and friends, the disgrace and oppression of your country! I call upon you by the hereditary right of Barras, transmitted through a long series of ages, by the beneficent government of

Merlin and Reubell, those worthy successours of Charlemagne whose authority was as mild as it was lawful—I call upon you to revenge on Buonaparté the despotism of that Directory who condemned the far greater part of yourselves to beggary and exile, who covered France with Bastiles and scaffolds; who doomed the most respectable remaining members of their community, the Pichegrues, the Barbé Marbois the Barthelemis, to a lingering death in the pestilential wilds of Guiana—I call upon you to avenge on Buonaparté the cause of those councils of five hundred, or of two hundred, of elders or of youngsters, those disgusting and nauseous mockeries of representative assemblies; those miserable councils which sycophant sophists had converted into machines for fabricating decrees of proscription and confiscation, which not only proscribed unborn thousands, but, by a refinement and innovation in rapine, visited the sins of the children upon the fathers and beggared parents, not for the offences but for the misfortunes of their sons. I call upon you to restore this Directory and these Councils, and all this horrible profanation of the name of a republick, and to punish those who delivered you from them. I exhort you to reverence the den of these banditti as '*the sanctuary of the laws*' and to lament the day in which this intolerable nuisance was abated as '*an unfortunate day.*' Last of all, I exhort you once more to follow that deplorable chimera—the first lure that led you to destruction—the sovereignty of the people—though I know, and you have bitterly felt, that you never were so much slaves, in fact, as since you have been sovereigns in theory!"

Let me ask Mr. Attorney General, whether, upon his supposition, I have not given you a faithful translation of this ode; and I think I may safely repeat, that if this be the language of a royalist addressed to royalists it must be the production of a lunatick. But on my supposition, every thing is natural and consistent. You have the sentiments and language of a jacobin.—It is therefore probable, if you take it as a

historical republication of a jacobin piece—It is just if you take it as a satirical representation of jacobin opinions and projects.

Perhaps it will be said, that this is the production of a royalist writer, who assumes a republican disguise to serve royalist purposes; but if my learned friend chooses that supposition, I think an equal absurdity returns upon him in another shape. We must then suppose it to be intended to excite republican discontent and insurrection against Buonaparté. It must then be taken as addressed to republicans.—Would Mr. Peltier in that case, have disclosed his name as the publisher? Would he not much rather have circulated the ode in the name of Chenier, without prefixing his own, which was more than sufficient to warn his jacobinical readers against all his counsels and exhortations. If he had circulated it under the name of Chenier only, he would indeed have hung out republican colours; but by prefixing his own, he appears without disguise. You must suppose him then to say: "Republicans! I your mortal enemy for fourteen years, whom you have robbed of his all, whom you have forbidden to revisit his country under pain of death, who from the beginning of the revolution, unceasingly poured ridicule upon your follies, and exposed your crimes to detestation, who in the cause of my unhappy sovereign braved your daggers for three years, and who escaped almost by miracle, from your assassins in September, who has since been constantly employed in warning other nations by your example, and in collecting the evidence upon which history will pronounce your condemnation; I who at this moment deliberately choose exile and honourable poverty, rather than give the slightest mark of external compliance with your abominable institutions; I your most irreconcilable and indefatigable enemy, offer you counsel which you know can only be a snare into which I expect you to fall, though by the mere publication of my name I have sufficiently forewarned you that I can have no aim but that of your destruction."

I ask you again, gentlemen, is this common sense? Is it not as clear from the name of the author, that it is not addressed to jacobins as from the contents of the publication, that it is not addressed to royalists? It may be the genuine work of Chenier, for the topicks are such as he would employ. It may be a satire on jacobinism; for the language is well adapted to such a composition—But it cannot be a royalist's invective against Buonaparte, intended by him to stir up either royalists or republicans to the destruction of the first consul.

I cannot conceive it to be necessary that I should minutely examine this poem to confirm my construction. There are one or two passages on which I shall make a few observations. The first is the contrast between the state of England and that of France, of which an ingenious friend has favoured me with a translation, which I shall take the liberty of reading to you.

Her glorious fabrick England rears
On law's fix'd base alone;
Law's guardian pow'r while each reveres,
England! thy people's freedom fears
No danger from the throne.

For there, before almighty law,
High birth, high place, with pious awe,
In reverend homage bend;
There man's free spirit, unconstrain'd
Exults, in man's best rights maintain'd,
Rights, which by ancient valour gain'd,
From age to age descend.

Britons, by no base fear dismay'd,
May power's worst acts arraign.
Does tyrant force their rights invade?
They call on law's impartial aid,
Nor call that aid in vain.

Hence, of her sacred charter proud,
With every earthly good endow'd,
O'er subject seas unfurl'd,
Britannia waves her standard wide,
Hence, sees her freighted navies ride
Up wealthy Thames' majestick tide,
The wonder of the world.

Here at first sight, you may perhaps think that the consistency of the jacobin character is not supported, that the republican disguise is thrown off, that the royalist stands unmasked before you; but, on more consideration you will find, that such an inference would be too hasty. The leaders of the revolution are now reduced to envy that British constitution which, in the infatuation of their presumptuous ignorance, they once rejected with scorn. They are now slaves, as they themselves confess, because twelve years ago they did not believe Englishmen to be free. They cannot but see that England is the only popular government in Europe; and they are compelled to pay a reluctant homage to the justice of English principles. The praise of England is too striking a satire on their own government to escape them; and I may accordingly venture to appeal to all those who know any thing of the political circles of Paris, whether such contrasts between France and England as that which I have read to you be not the most favourite topicks of the opponents of Buonaparte.—But in the very next stanza,

> Cependant, encore affligée
> Par l'odieuse hérédité,
> Londres de titres surchargée,
> Londres n'a pas *l'Egalité*.

You see, that though they are forced to surrender an unwilling tribute to our liberty, they cannot yet renounce all their fantastick and deplorable chimeras. They endeavour to make a compromise between the experience on which they cannot shut their eyes, and the wretched systems to which they still cling. Fanaticism is the most incurable of all mental diseases; because in all its forms, religious, philosophical, or political, it is distinguished by a sort of mad contempt for experience, which alone can correct the errours of practical judgment. And these democratical fanaticks still speak of the odious principle of "hereditary government." They still complain that we have not "*equality*." They know not that this odious principle of inheritance is our bulwark against

tyranny; that if we had their pretended equality we should soon cease to be the objects of their envy. These are the sentiments which you would naturally expect from half-cured lunaticks. But once more I ask you, whether they can be the sentiments of M. Peltier? Would he complain that we have too much monarchy, or too much of what they call aristocracy? If he has any prejudices against the English government, must they not be of an entirely opposite kind?

I have only one observation more to make on this poem. It relates to the passage which is supposed to be an incitement to assassination. In my way of considering the subject, M. Peltier is not answerable for that passage, whatever its demerits may be. It is put into the mouth of a jacobin; and it will not, I think, be affirmed, that if it were an incitement to assassinate, it would be very unsuitable to his character. Experience, and very recent experience, has abundantly proved how widely the French revolution has blackened men's imaginations, what a daring and desperate cast it has given to their characters, how much it has made them regard the most extravagant projects of guilt as easy and ordinary expedients; and to what a horrible extent it has familiarized their minds to crimes which before were only known among civilized nations by the history of barbarous times, or as the subject of poetical fiction. But, thank God, gentlemen, we in England have not learned to charge any man with inciting assassination, not even a member of that atrocious sect who have revived political assassination in Christendom, except when we are compelled to do so by irresistible evidence. Where is that evidence here? In general it is immoral because indecent to speak with levity, still more to anticipate with pleasure, the destruction of any human being. But between this immorality and the horrible crime of inciting to assassination, there is a wide interval indeed. The real or supposed author of this Ode gives you to understand that he would hear with no great sorrow of the destruction of the

first consul. But surely the publication of that sentiment is very different from an exhortation to assassinate.

But, says my learned friend, why is the example of Brutus celebrated? Why are the French reproached with their baseness in not copying that example? Gentlemen, I have no judgment to give on the act of Marcus Brutus. I rejoice that I have not. I should not dare to condemn the acts of brave and virtuous men in extraordinary and terrible circumstances, and which have been, as it were, consecrated by the veneration of so many ages. Still less should I dare to weaken the authority of the most sacred rules of duty, by praises which would be immoral even if the acts themselves were in some measure justified by the awful circumstances under which they were done. I am not the panegyrist of "those instances of doubtful publick spirit at which morality is perplexed, reason is staggered, and from which affrighted nature recoils." *

But whatever we may think of the act of Brutus, surely my learned friend will not contend that every allusion to it, every panegyrick on it, which has appeared for eighteen centuries, in prose and verse, is an incitement to assassination. From the *conspicuæ divina Phillipica famæ* down to the last schoolboy declamation, he will find scarce a work of literature without such allusions, and not very many without such panegyricks. I must say that he has construed this ode more like an attorney general than a critick in poetry. According to his construction, almost every fine writer in our language is a preacher of murder.

Having said so much on the first of these supposed libels, I shall be very short on the two that remain—the verses ascribed to a Dutch patriot and the parody of the speech of Lepidus. In the first of these, the piercing eye of Mr. Attorney General has again discovered an incitement to assassinate—the most learn-

* Mr. Burke's Works, vol. 4. p. 427.

ed incitement to assassinate that ever was addressed to such ignorant ruffians as are most likely to be employed for such nefarious purposes! An obscure allusion, to an obscure and perhaps fabulous part of Roman history, to the supposed murder of Romulus, about which none of us know any thing, and of which the jacobins of Paris and Amsterdam probably never heard. But the *apotheosis!* Here my learned friend has a little forgotten himself. He seems to argue as if apotheosis always presupposed death. But he must know that Augustus and even Tiberius and Nero were deified during their lives, and he cannot have forgotten the terms in which one of the court poets of Augustus speaks of his master's divinity—

——Præsens divus habebitur
Augustus adjectis Britannis
Imperio.—

If any modern rival of Augustus should choose that path to Olympus, I think he will find it more steep and rugged than that by which Pollux and Hercules climbed to the ethereal towers, and that he must be content with purpling his lips with Burgundy on earth, as he has very little chance of purpling them with nectar among the gods.

The utmost that can seriously be made of this passage is, that it is a wish for a man's death. I repeat that I do not contend for the decency of publickly declaring such wishes, or even for the propriety of entertaining them: but the distance between such a wish and a persuasive to murder, is immense. Such a wish for a man's death is very often little more than a strong, though, I admit, not a very decent way of expressing detestation for his character.

But without pursuing this argument any further I think myself entitled to apply to these verses the same reasoning which I have already applied to the first supposed libel on Buonaparte. If they be the real composition of a pretended Dutch patriot, Mr. Peltier may republish them innocently. If they be a satire on such pretended Dutch patriots, they are not a libel on Buonaparte. Granting, for the

sake of argument, that they did entertain a serious exhortation to assassinate, is there any thing in such an exhortation inconsistent with the character of these pretended patriots?

They who were disaffected to the mild and tolerant government of their flourishing country, because it did not exactly square with all their theoretical whimsies; they who revolted from that administration as tyrannical, which made Holland one of the wonders of the world for protected industry, for liberty of action and opinion, and for a prosperity which I may venture to call the greatest victory of man over hostile elements; they who called in the aid of the fiercest tyrants that Europe ever saw, who served in the armies of Robespierre, under the impudent pretext of giving liberty to their country, and who have, finally, buried in the same grave its liberty, its independence, and perhaps its national existence, they are not men entitled to much tenderness from a political satirist, and he will scarcely violate dramatick propriety if he impute to them any language, however criminal and detestable. They who could not brook the authority of their old, lazy, goodnatured government, are not likely to endure with patience the yoke of that stern domination which they have brought upon themselves, and which, as far as relates to them, is only the just punishment of their crimes. They who call in tyrants to establish liberty, who sacrifice the independence of their country under pretence of reforming its internal constitution, are capable of every thing.

I know nothing more odious than their character, unless it be that of those who invoked the aid of the oppressors of Switzerland to be the deliverers of Ireland! Their guilt has indeed, peculiar aggravations. In the name of liberty they were willing to surrender their country into the hands of tyrants, the most lawless, faithless, and merciless that ever scourged Europe; who at the very moment of their negotiation, were covered with the blood of the unhappy Swiss, the martyrs of real independence

and of real liberty. Their success would have been the destruction of the only free community remaining in Europe—of England, the only bulwark of the remains of European independence. Their means were the passions of an ignorant and barbarous peasantry, and a civil war, which could not fail to produce all the horrible crimes and horrible retaliations of the last calamity that can befall society—a servile revolt. They sought the worst of ends by the most abominable of means. They laboured for the subjugation of the world at the expense of crimes and miseries which men of humanity and conscience would have thought too great a price for the deliverance of mankind.

The last of these supposed libels, is the parody on the speech of Lepidus, in the fragments of Sallust. It is certainly a very ingenious and happy parody of an original, attended with some historical obscurity and difficulty, which it is no part of our present business to examine. This parody is said to have been clandestinely placed among the papers of one of the most amiable and respectable men in France, M. Camille Jordan, in order to furnish a pretext for involving that excellent person in a charge of conspiracy. This is said to have been done by a spy of Fouché. Now, gentlemen, I take this to be a satire on Fouché, on his manufacture of plots—on his contrivances for the destruction of innocent and virtuous men—and I should admit it to be a libel on Fouché if it were possible to libel him. I own that I should like to see Fouché appear as a plaintiff, seeking reparation for his injured character, before any tribunal safe from his fangs, where he had not the power of sending the judges to Guiana or Madagascar. It happens that we know something of the history of Mr. Fouché from a very credible witness against him—from himself. You will perhaps excuse me for reading to you some passages of his letters in the year 1793, from which you will judge, whether any satire can be so severe as the portrait he draws of himself.

"Convinced that there are no innocent men in this infamous city,* but those who are opposed and loaded with irons by the assassins of the people, † we are on our guard against the *tears of repentance!* nothing can disarm our severity. They have not yet dared to solicit the repeal of our first decree for the *annihilation of the city of Lyons!* but scarcely any thing has yet been done to carry it into execution." (Pathetick!) "The demolitions are too slow. More rapid means are necessary to republican impatience. The explosion of the mine, and the devouring activity of the flames can alone adequately represent the omnipotence of the people." (Unhappy populace, always the pretext, the instrument, and the victim of political crimes!) Their will cannot be checked like that of tyrants. It ought to have the effects of thunder!" The next specimen of this worthy gentleman which I shall give, is in a speech to the Jacobin Club of Paris, on the 21st of December, 1793, by his worthy colleague in the mission to Lyons, Collot d'Herbois:

"We are accused" (you, gentlemen, will soon see how unjustly) "of being cannibals, men of blood: but it is in counterrevolutionary petitions, hawked about for signature by aristocrats, that this charge is made against us. They examine with the most scrupulous attention how the counterrevolutionists are put to death, and they affect to say, that they are not killed at one stroke." (He speaks for himself and his colleague Fouché, and one would suppose that he was going to deny the fact—but nothing like it.) "Ah! Jacobins, did Chalier ‡ die at the first stroke, &c.? A drop of blood poured from generous veins goes to my heart," (humane creature!) "but I have no pity for conspirators. (He however proceeds to state a most undeniable proof of his compassion.) We cau-

* The unhappy city of Lyons.

† He means the murderers who were condemned to death for their crimes.

‡ This Chalier was the Marat of Lyons.

sed two hundred to be shot at once, and it is charged upon us as a crime!" (Astonishing!) that such an act of humanity should be called a crime! "They do not "know that it is a proof of our sensibility! When twenty criminals are guillotined, the last of them dies twenty deaths: but these two hundred conspirators perished at once. They speak of sensibility, *we also are full of sensibility!* The *jacobins have all the virtues!* They are *compassionate*, *humane*, *generous!*" (This is somewhat hard to be understood, but it is perfectly explained by what follows.) "But they reserve these sentiments for the patriots who are their brethren, which the aristocrats never will be."

The only remaining document with which I shall trouble you, is a letter from Fouché to his amiable colleague Collot d'Herbois, which, as might be expected in a confidential communication, breathes all the native tenderness of his soul. "Let us be *terrible*, that we may run no risk of being feeble or *cruel*. Let us annihilate in our wrath, at a single blow, all rebels, all conspirators, all traitors," (comprehensive words in his vocabulary) "to spare ourselves the pain, the long agony, of punishing like kings!" (Nothing but philanthropy in this worthy man's heart.) "Let us exercise justice after the example of nature. Let us avenge ourselves like a people. Let us strike like the thunderbolt; and let even the ashes of our enemies disappear from the soil of liberty! Let the perfidious and ferocious English be attacked from every side. Let the whole republick form a volcano to pour devouring lava upon them. May the infamous island which produced these monsters, who no longer belong to humanity, be forever buried under the waves of the ocean! "Farewell, my friend! Tears of joy stream from my eyes," (we shall soon see for what) "they deluge my soul."

[Then follows a little postscript, which explains the cause of this excessive joy, so hyperbolical in its language, and which fully justifies the indignation of the humane writer against the "ferocious English," who are so stupid and so cruel as never to have thought

of a benevolent massacre, by way of sparing themselves the pain of punishing individual criminals.]

"*We have only one way of celebrating victories.—We send this evening two hundred and thirteen rebels to be shot!*"

Such, gentlemen is M. Fouché, who is said to have procured this parody to be mixed with the papers of my excellent friend, Camille Jordan, to serve as a pretext for his destruction. Fabricated plots are among the most usual means of such tyrants for such purposes; and if Mr. Peltier intended to libel (shall I say ?) Fouché by this composition, I can easily understand both the parody and the history of its origin. But if it be directed against Buonaparté to serve royalist purposes, I must confess myself wholly unable to conceive why Mr. Peltier should have stigmatized his work and deprived it of all authority and power of persuasion, by prefixing to it the infamous name of Fouché.

On the same principle, I think one of the observations of my learned friend, on the title of this publication, may be retorted on him. He has called your attention to the title "L'Ambigu, ou Variétés atroces et amusantes." Now, gentlemen, I must ask, whether, had these been Mr. Peltier's own invectives against Buonaparté he would himself have branded them as "atrocious!"—But if they be specimens of the opinions and invectives of a French faction, the title is very natural, and the epithets are perfectly intelligible. Indeed I scarce know a more appropriate title for the whole tragick comedy of the revolution than that of "atrocious and amusing varieties."

My learned friend has made some observations on other parts of this publication, to show the spirit which animates the author, but they do not seem to be very material to the question between us. It is no part of my case that Mr. Peltier has spoken with some unpoliteness, with some flippancy, with more severity than my learned friend may approve, of factions and of administrations in France. Mr. Peltier cannot love the revolution, or any government that

has grown out of it and maintains it. The revolutionists have destroyed his family, they have seized his inheritance, they have beggared, exiled, and proscribed himself. If he did not detest them he would be unworthy of living, and he would be a base hypocrite if he were to conceal his sentiments. But I must again remind you, that this is not an information for not sufficiently honouring the French revolution, for not showing sufficient reverence for the consular government. These are no crimes among us. England is not yet reduced to such an ignominious dependence. Our hearts and conciences are not yet in the bonds of so wretched a slavery. This is an information for a libel on Buonaparte, and if you believe the principal intention of Mr. Peltier to have been to republish the writings or to satirize the character of other individuals, you must acquit him of a libel on the first consul.

Here, gentlemen, I think I might stop, if I had only to consider the defence of Mr. Peltier. I trust that you are already convinced of his innocence. I fear I have exhausted your patience, as I am sure I have very nearly exhausted my own strength. But so much seems to me to depend on your verdict, that I cannot forbear from laying before you some considerations of a more general nature.

Believing as I do, that we are on the eve of a great struggle; that this is only the first battle between reason and power; that you have now in your hands, committed to your trust, the only remains of free discussion in Europe, now confined to this kingdom; addressing you, therefore, as the guardians of the most important interests of mankind; convinced that the unfettered exercise of reason depends more on your present verdict than on any other that was ever delivered by a jury, I cannot conclude without bringing before you the sentiments and examples of our ancestors in some of those awful and perilous situations by which Divine Providence has in former ages tried the virtue of the English nation. We are fallen upon times in which it behoves us to strengthen

our spirits by the contemplation of great examples of constancy. Let us seek for them in the annals of our forefathers.

The reign of queen Elizabeth may be considered as the opening of the modern history of England, especially in its connexion with the modern system of Europe, which began about that time to assume the form that it preserved till the French revolution. It was a very memorable period, of which the maxims ought to be engraven on the head and heart of every Englishman. Philip II. at the head of the greatest empire then in the world, was openly aiming at universal domination, and his project was so far from being thought chimerical by the wisest of his contemporaries, that in the opinion of the great *Duc de Sully* he must have been successful, "if, by a most singular combination of circumstances, he had not at the same time been resisted by two such strong heads as those of Henry IV. and queen Elizabeth." To the most extensive and opulent dominions, the most numerous and disciplined armies, the most renowned captains, the greatest revenue, he added also the most formidable power over opinion. He was the chief of a religious faction, animated by the most atrocious fanaticism, prepared to second his ambition, by rebellion, anarchy and regicide, in every protestant state. Elizabeth was among the first objects of his hostility. That wise and magnanimous princess placed herself in the front of the battle for the liberties of Europe. Though she had to contend at home with his fanatical faction, which almost occupied Ireland, which divided Scotland, and was not of contemptible strength in England, she aided the oppressed inhabitants of the Netherlands in their just and glorious resistance to his tyranny; she aided Henry the Great, in suppressing the abominable rebellion which anarchical principles had excited and Spanish arms had supported in France, and after a long reign of various fortune, in which she preserved her unconquered spirit through great calamities, and still greater dangers, she at length broke the strength of the

enemy, and reduced his power within such limits as to be compatible with the safety of England, and of all Europe. Her only effectual ally was the spirit of her people, and her policy flowed from that magnanimous nature which in the hour of peril teaches better lessons than those of cold reason. Her great heart inspired her with a higher and a nobler wisdom—which disdained to appeal to the low and sordid passions of her people even for the protection of their low and sordid interests, because she knew, or rather she felt, that these are effeminate, creeping, cowardly, short sighted passions, which shrink from conflict even in defence of their own mean objects. In a righteous cause she roused those generous affections of her people which alone teach boldness, constancy, and foresight, and which are therefore the only safe guardians of the lowest as well as the highest interests of a nation. In her memorable address to her army, when the invasion of the kingdom was threatened by Spain, this woman of heroick spirit, disdained to speak to them of their ease and their commerce, and their wealth, and their safety. No! She touched another chord—She spoke of their national honour, of their dignity as Englishmen, of "the foul scorn that Parma or Spain *should dare* to invade the borders of her realms." She breathed into them those grand and powerful sentiments which exalt vulgar men into heroes, which led them into the battle of their country, armed with holy and irresistible enthusiasm; which even cover with their shield all the ignoble interests that base calculation and cowardly selfishness tremble to hazard, but shrink from defending. A sort of prophetick instinct, if I may so speak, seems to have revealed to her the importance of that great instrument for rousing and guiding the minds of men, of the effects of which she had no experience; which since her time, has changed the condition of the world; but which few modern statesmen have thoroughly understood or wisely employed; which is no doubt connected with many ridiculous and degrading details, which has produced, and which may again

produce, terrible mischiefs; but of which the influence must after all be considered as the most certain effect and the most efficacious cause of civilisation, and which, whether it be a blessing or a curse, is the most powerful engine that a politician can move—I mean the press. It is a curious fact, that in the year of the Armada, queen Elizabeth caused to be printed the first gazettes that ever appeared in England; and I own, when I consider that this mode of rousing a national spirit was then absolutely unexampled, that she could have no assurance of its efficacy from the precedents of former times, I am disposed to regard her having recourse to it as one of the most sagacious experiments, one of the greatest discoveries of political genius, one of the most striking anticipations of future experience, that we find in history. I mention it to you, to justify the opinion that I have ventured to state, of the close connexion of our national spirit with our press, even our periodical press. I cannot quit the reign of Elizabeth, without laying before you the maxims of her policy, in the language of the greatest and wisest of men.—Lord Bacon, in one part of his discourse on her reign, speaks thus of her support of Holland: "But let me rest upon the honourable and continual aid and relief she hath given to the distressed and desolate people of the Low Countries; a people recommended unto her by ancient confederacy and daily intercourse, by their cause so innocent, and their fortune so lamentable!" In another passage of the same discourse, he thus speaks of the general system of her foreign policy; as the protector of Europe, in words too remarkable to require any commentary. "Then it is her government, and her government alone, that hath been the sconce and fort of all Europe which hath lett this proud nation from overrunning all. If any state be yet free from his factions erected in the bowels thereof; if there be any state wherein this faction is erected that is not yet fired with civil troubles; if there be any state under his protection that enjoyeth moderate liberty, upon whom he tyrannizeth not; it is the

mercy of this renowned queen that standeth between them and their misfortunes!"

The next great conspirator against the rights of men and of nations, against the security and independence of all European states, against every kind and degree of civil and religious liberty, was Louis XIV. In his time the character of the English nation was the more remarkably displayed, because it was counteracted by an apostate and perfidious government. During great part of his reign, you know that the throne of England was filled by princes who deserted the cause of their country and of Europe, who were the accomplices and the tools of the oppressor of the world; who were even so unmanly, so unprincely, so base, as to have sold themselves to his ambition; who were content that he should enslave the continent, if he enabled them to enslave Great Britain. These princes, traitors to their own royal dignity and to the feelings of the generous people whom they ruled, preferred the condition of the first slave of Louis XIV to the dignity of the first freemen of England, yet even under these princes, the feelings of the people of this kingdom were displayed on a most memorable occasion towards foreign sufferers and foreign oppressors. The revocation of the edict of Nantz, threw fifty thousand French protestants on our shores. They were received, as I trust the victims of tyranny ever will be in this land, which seems chosen by Providence to be the home of the exile, the refuge of the oppressed. They were welcomed by a people high spirited as well as humane, who did not insult them by clandestine charity; who did not give alms in secret lest their charity should be detected by the neighbouring tyrants! No! They were publickly and nationally welcomed and relieved. They were bid to raise their voice against their oppressor, and to proclaim their wrongs to all mankind. They did so. They were joined in the cry of just indignation by every Englishman worthy of the name. It was a fruitful indignation which soon produced the successful resistance of

Europe to the common enemy. Even then, when Jeffries disgraced the bench which his lordship now adorns, no refugee was deterred by prosecution for libel from giving vent to his feelings, from arraigning the oppressor in the face of all Europe.

During this ignominious period of our history, a war arose on the continent, which cannot but present itself to the mind on such an occasion as this; the only war that was ever made on the avowed ground of attacking a free press. I speak of the invasion of Holland by Louis XIV. The liberties which the Dutch gazettes had taken in discussing his conduct, were the sole cause of this very extraordinary and memorable war, which was of short duration, unprecedented in its avowed principle, and most glorious in its event for the liberties of mankind. That republick at all times so interesting to Englishmen—in the worst times of both countries our brave enemies; in their best times, our most faithful and valuable friends, was then charged with the defence of a free press against the oppressor of Europe, as a sacred trust for the benefit of all generations. They felt the sacredness of the deposit, they felt the dignity of the station in which they were placed, and though deserted by the Un-English government of England, they asserted their own ancient character and drove out the great armies and great captains of the oppressor with defeat and disgrace. Such was the result of the only war hitherto avowedly undertaken to oppress a free country because she allowed the free and publick exercise of reason. And may the God of justice and liberty grant that such may ever be the result of wars made by tyrants against the rights of mankind, especially against that right which is the guardian of every other.

This war, gentlemen, had the effect of raising up from obscurity the great prince of Orange, afterwards king William III, the deliverer of Holland, the deliverer of England, the deliverer of Europe; the only hero who was distinguished by such a happy union of fortune and virtue that the objects of his ambition were

always the same with the interests of humanity; perhaps the only man who devoted the whole of his life exclusively to the service of mankind. This most illustrious benefactor of Europe, this "hero without vanity or passion," as he has been justly and beautifully called by a venerable prelate,* who never made a step towards greatness without securing or advancing liberty, who had been made Stadtholder of Holland for the salvation of his own country, was soon after made king of England for the deliverance of ours. When the people of Great Britain had once more a government worthy of them, they returned to the feelings and principles of their ancestors; and resumed their former station and their former duties as protectors of the independence of nations. The people of England, delivered from a government which disgraced, oppressed, and betrayed them, fought under William as their forefathers had fought under Elizabeth, and after an almost uninterrupted struggle of more than twenty years, in which they were often abandoned by fortune, but never by their own constancy and magnanimity, they at length once more defeated those projects of guilty ambition boundless aggrandizement, and universal domination, which had a second time threatened to overwhelm the whole civilized world. They rescued Europe from being swallowed up in the gulph of extensive empire, which the experience of all times points out as the grave of civilisation, where men are driven by violent conquest and military oppression into lethargy and slavishness of heart, where, after their arts have perished with the mental vigour from which they spring, they are plunged by the combined power of effeminacy and ferocity into irreclaimable and hopeless barbarism. Our ancestors established the safety of their own country by providing for that of others, and rebuilt the European system upon such firm foundations, that nothing less than the tempest of the French revolution could have shaken it.

* Dr. Shipley, Bishop of St. Asaph.

This arduous struggle was suspended for a short time by the peace of Ryswick. The interval between that treaty and the war of the succession enables us to judge how our ancestors acted in a very peculiar situation which requires maxims of policy very different from those which usually govern states. The treaty which they had concluded was in truth and substance only a truce. The ambition and the power of the enemy were such as to render real peace impossible. And it was perfectly obvious that the disputed succession of the Spanish monarch would soon render it no longer practicable to preserve even the appearance of amity. It was desirable, however, not to provoke the enemy by unseasonable hostility; but it was still more desirable, it was absolutely necessary, to keep up the national jealousy and indignation against him who was soon to be their open enemy. It might naturally have been apprehended that the press might have driven into premature war a prince who not long before had been violently exasperated by the press of another free country. I have looked over the political publications of that time with some care, and I can venture to say, that at no period were the system and projects of Louis XIV animadverted on with more freedom and boldness than during that interval. Our ancestors and the heroick prince who governed them, did not deem it wise policy to disarm the national mind for the sake of prolonging a truce. They were both too proud and too wise to pay so great a price for so small a benefit.

In the course of the eighteenth century, a great change took place in the state of political discussion in this country. I speak of the multiplication of newspapers. I know that newspapers are not very popular in this place, which is, indeed, not very surprising; because they are known here only by their faults. Their publishers come here only to receive the chastisement due to their offences. With all their faults, I own, I cannot help feeling some respect for whatever is a proof of the increased curiosity and increased knowledge of mankind; and I cannot help thinking,

that if somewhat more indulgence and consideration were shown for the difficulties of their situation, it might prove one of the best correctives of their faults, by teaching them that self respect, which is the best security for liberal conduct towards others. But however that may be, it is very certain that the multiplication of these channels of popular information has produced a great change in the state of our domestick and foreign politicks. At home, it has, in truth, produced a gradual revolution in our government. By increasing the number of those who exercise some sort of judgment on publick affairs, it has created a substantial democracy, infinitely more important than those democratical forms which have been the subject of so much contest. So that I may venture to say, England has not only in its forms the most democratical government that ever existed in a great country, but in substance, has the most democratical government that ever existed in any country; if the most *substantial* democracy be that state in which the greatest number of men feel an interest and express an opinion upon political questions, and in which the greatest number of judgments and wills concur in influencing publick measures.

The same circumstances gave great additional importance to our discussion of continental politicks. That discussion was no longer, as in the preceding century, confined to a few pamphlets, written and read only by men of education and rank, which reached the multitude very slowly and rarely. In newspapers an almost daily appeal was made, directly, or indirectly, to the judgment and passions of almost every individual in the kingdom, upon the measures and principles not only of his own country, but of every state in Europe. Under such circumstances, the tone of these publications in speaking of foreign governments became a matter of importance. You will excuse me, therefore, if, before I conclude, I remind you of the general nature of their language on one or two very remarkable occasions, and of the boldness with which they arraigned the crimes of powerful sove-

reigns, without any check from the laws and magistrates of their own country. This toleration, or rather this protection, was too long and uniform to be accidental. I am, indeed, very much mistaken, if it be not founded upon a policy which this country cannot abandon without sacrificing her liberty and endangering her national existence.

The first remarkable instance which I shall choose to state of the unpunished and protected boldness of the English press, of the freedom with which they animadverted on the policy of powerful sovereigns is the partition of Poland in 1772: an act not perhaps so horrible in its means, nor so deplorable in its immediate effects, as some other atrocious invasions of national independence which have followed it; but the most abominable in its general tendency and ultimate consequences of any political crime recorded in history, because it was the first practical breach in the system of Europe, the first example of atrocious robbery perpetrated on unoffending countries which have been since so liberally followed and which has broken down all the barriers of habit and principle which guarded defenceless states. The perpetrators of this atrocious crime were the most powerful sovereigns of the continent, whose hostility it certainly was not the interest of Great Britain wantonly to incur. They were the most illustrious princes of their age, and some of them were doubtless entitled to the highest praise for their domestick administration, as well as for the brilliant qualities which distinguished their characters. But none of these circumstances, no dread of their resentment, no admiration of their talents, no consideration for their rank, silenced the animadversion of the English press. Some of you remember, all of you know, that a loud and unanimous cry of reprobation and execration broke out against them from every part of this kingdom. It was perfectly uninfluenced by any considerations of our own mere national interest, which might perhaps be supposed to be rather favourably affected by that partition. It was not, as in some other countries, the

indignation of rival robbers, who were excluded from their share of the prey. It was the moral anger of disinterested spectators against atrocious crimes, the gravest and the most dignified moral principle which the God of justice has implanted in the human heart, that of which the dread is the only restraint on the actions of powerful criminals, and of which the promulgation is the only punishment that can be inflicted on them. It is a restraint which ought not to be weakened. It is a punishment which no good man can desire to mitigate.

That great crime was spoken of as it deserved in England. Robbery was not described by any courtly circumlocutions. Rapine was not called policy; nor was the oppression of an innocent people termed a *mediation* in their domestick differences. No prosecutions, no criminal informations followed the liberty and the boldness of the language then employed. No complaints even appear to have been made from abroad, much less any insolent menaces against the free constitution which protected the English press. The people of England were too long known throughout Europe for the proudest potentate to expect to silence our press by such means.

I pass over the second partition of Poland in 1792. You all remember what passed on that occasion, the universal abhorrence expressed by every man and every writer of every party, the succours that were publickly preparing by large bodies of individuals of all parties for the oppressed Poles. I hasten to the final dismemberment of that unhappy kingdom, which seems to me the most striking example in our history of the habitual, principled, and deeply rooted forbearance of those who administer the law towards political writers.

We were engaged in the most extensive, bloody, and dangerous war that this country ever knew, and the parties to the dismemberment of Poland were our allies, and our only powerful and effective allies. We had every motive of policy to court their friendship. Every reason of state seemed to require

that we should not permit them to be abused and vilified by English writers. What was the fact? Did any Englishman consider himself at liberty, on account of temporary interests, however urgent, to silence those feelings of humanity and justice which guard the certain and permanent interests of all countries? You all remember that every voice and every pen, and every press in England were unceasingly employed to brand that abominable robbery. You remember that this was not confined to private writers, but that the same abhorrence was expressed by every member of both houses of parliament who was not under the restraints of ministerial reserve. No minister dared even to blame the language of honest indignation which might be very inconvenient to his most important political projects; and I hope I may venture to say, that no English assembly would have endured such a sacrifice of eternal justice to any miserable interest of an hour. Did the law officers of the crown venture to come into a court of justice to complain of the boldest of the publications of that time? They did not. I do not say that they felt any disposition to do so. I believe that they could not. But I do say that if they had; if they had spoken of the necessity of confining our political writers to cold narrative and unfeeling argument; if they had informed the jury, that they did not prosecute history, but invective; that if private writers be at all to blame great princes, it must be with moderation and decorum, the sound heads and honest hearts of an English jury would have confounded such sophistry, and declared by their verdict, that moderation of language is a relative term, which varies with the subject to which it is applied; that atrocious crimes are not to be related as calmly and coolly as indifferent or trifling events; that if there be a decorum due to exalted rank and authority, there is also a much more sacred decorum due to virtue and to human nature, which would be outraged and trampled under foot, by speaking of guilt in a lukewarm language, falsely called moderate.

Soon after, gentlemen, there followed an act, in comparison with which all the deeds of rapine and blood perpetrated in the world are innocence itself—the invasion and destruction of Switzerland, that unparalleled scene of guilt and enormity; that unprovoked aggression against an innocent country, which had been the sanctuary of peace and liberty for three centuries; respected as a sort of sacred territory by the fiercest ambition; raised, like its own mountains beyond the region of the storms which raged around on every side; the only warlike people that never sent forth armies to disturb their neighbours; the only government that ever accumulated treasures without imposing taxes, an innocent treasure, unstained by the tears of the poor, the inviolate patrimony of the commonwealth, which attested the virtue of a long series of magistrates, but which at length caught the eye of the spoiler, and became the fatal occasion of their ruin! Gentlemen, the destruction of such a country, "its cause so innocent, and its fortune so lamentable!" made a deep impression on the people of England. I will ask my learned friend, if we had then been at peace with the French republick, whether we must have been silent spectators of the foulest crimes that ever blotted the name of humanity! whether we must like cowards and slaves have repressed the compassion and indignation with which that horrible scene of tyranny had filled our hearts? Let me suppose, gentlemen, that ALOYS REDING, who has displayed in our times the simplicity, magnanimity, and piety of ancient heroes, had, after his glorious struggle, honoured this kingdom by choosing it as his refuge; that after performing prodigies of valour at the head of his handful of heroick peasants on the field of Margarten, where his ancestor, the *Landamman Reding*, had, five hundred years before, defeated the first oppressors of Switzerland, he had selected this country to be his residence, as the chosen abode of liberty, as the ancient and inviolable asylum of the oppressed; would my learned friend have had the boldness to have said to this hero, "that he must hide his tears"

(the tears shed by a hero over the ruins of his country!) "lest they might provoke the resentment of *Rewbell* or *Rapinat!* that he must smother the sorrow and the anger with which his heart was loaded; that he must breathe his murmurs low, lest they might be overheard by the oppressor!" Would this have been the language of my learned friend? I know that it would not. I know, that by such a supposition I have done wrong to his honourable feelings, to his honest English heart. I am sure that he knows as well as I do, that a nation which should *thus* receive the oppressed of other countries, would be preparing its own neck for the yoke. He knows the slavery which such a nation would deserve, and must speedily incur. He knows that sympathy with the unmerited sufferings of others, and disinterested anger against their oppressors, are, if I may so speak, the masters which are appointed by Providence to teach us fortitude in the defence of our own rights; that selfishness is a dastardly principle, which betrays its charge and flies from its post; and that those only can defend themselves with valour, who are animated by the moral approbation with which they can survey their sentiments towards others, who are ennobled in their own eyes by a consciousness that they are fighting for justice as well as interest; a consciousness which none can feel, but those who have felt for the wrongs of their brethren. These are the sentiments which my learned friend would have felt. He would have told the hero: "Your confidence is not deceived: this is still that England, of which the history may, perhaps, have contributed to fill your heart with the heroism of liberty. Every other country of Europe is crouching under the bloody tyrants who destroyed your country. We are unchanged; we are still the same people which received with open arms the victims of the tyranny of Philip II. and Louis XIV. We shall not exercise a cowardly and clandestine humanity! Here we are not so dastardly as to rob you of your greatest consolation. Here, protected by a free, brave, and high minded people, you may give

vent to your indignation; you may proclaim the crimes of your tyrants you may devote them to the execration of mankind; there is still one spot upon earth in which they are abhorred, without being dreaded!"

I am aware, gentlemen, that I have already abused your indulgence, but I must entreat you to bear with me for a short time longer, to allow me to suppose a case which might have occurred, in which you will see the horrible consequences of enforcing rigourously principles of law, which I cannot counteract, against political writers. We might have been at peace with France during the whole of that terrible period which elapsed between August 1792 and 1794, which has been usually called the reign of *Robespierre!* The only series of crimes, perhaps, in history, which, in spite of the common disposition to exaggerate extraordinary facts, has been beyond measure underrated in publick opinion. I say this, gentlemen, after an investigation, which I think entitles me to affirm it with confidence. Men's minds were oppressed by atrocity and the multitude of crimes; their humanity and their indolence took refuge in scepticism from such an overwhelming mass of guilt; and the consequence was, that all these unparalleled enormities, though proved not only with the fullest historical, but with the strictest judicial evidence, were at the time only half believed, and are now scarcely half remembered. When these atrocities were daily perpetrating, of which the greatest part are as little known to the publick in general as the campaigns of Genghis Khan, but are still protected from the scrutiny of men by the immensity of those voluminous records of guilt in which they are related, and under the mass of which they will be buried, till some historian be found with patience and courage enough to drag them forth into light, for the shame indeed, but for the instruction of mankind. When these crimes were perpetrating, which had the peculiar malignity, from the pretexts with which they were covered, of making the noblest ob-

jects of human pursuit seem odious and detestable; which has almost made the names of liberty, reformation, and humanity, synonimous with anarchy, robbery, and murder; which thus threatened not to extinguish every principle of improvement, to arrest the progress of civilized society, and to disinherit future generations of that rich succession, which they were entitled to expect from the knowledge and wisdom of the present, but to destroy the civilisation of Europe, which never gave such a proof of its vigour and robustness, as in being able to resist their destructive power; when all these horrours were acting in the greatest empire of the continent, I will ask my learned friend, if we had then been at peace with France, how English writers were to relate them so as to escape the charge of libelling a friendly government?

When *Robespierre*, in the debates in the national convention on the mode of murdering their blameless sovereign, objected to the formal and tedious mode of murder called a trial, and proposed to put him immediately to death, "on the principles of insurrection," because, to doubt the guilt of the king would be to doubt of the innocence of the convention; and if the king were not a traitor, the convention must be rebels; would my learned friend have had an English writer state all this with "*decorum and moderation?*" Would he have had an English writer state, that though this reasoning was not perfectly agreeable to our national laws, or perhaps to our national prejudices, yet it was not for him to make any observations on the judicial proceedings of foreign states?

When *Marat*, in the same convention called for two hundred and seventy thousand heads, must our English writers have said, that the remedy did, indeed, seem to their weak judgment rather severe; but that it was not for them to judge the conduct of so illustrious an assembly as the national convention, or the suggestions of so enlightened a statesman as M. Marat?

When that convention resounded with applause at the news of several hundred aged priests being thrown into the Loire, and particularly at the exclamation of *Carrier*, who communicated the intelligence, "What a revolutionary torrent is the Loire!" when these suggestions and narrations of murder, which have hitherto been only hinted and whispered in the most secret cabals, in the darkest caverns of banditti, were triumphantly uttered, patiently endured, and even loudly applauded by an assembly of seven hundred men, acting in the sight of all Europe, would my learned friend have wished that there had been found in England a single writer so base as to deliberate upon the most safe, decorous, and polite manner of relating all these things to his countrymen?

When Carrier ordered five hundred children under fourteen years of age to be shot, the greater part of whom escaped the fire from their size, when the poor victims ran for protection to the soldiers and were bayoneted clinging round their knees! would my friend—but I cannot pursue the strain of interrogation. It is too much. It would be a violence which I cannot practise on my own feelings. It would be an outrage to my friend. It would be an insult to humanity. No! Better, ten thousand times better, would it be that every press in the world were burnt, that the very use of letters were abolished, that we were returned to the honest ignorance of the rudest times, than that the results of civilisation should be made subservient to the purposes of barbarism, than that literature should be employed to teach a toleration for cruelty, to weaken moral hatred for guilt, to deprave and brutalize the human mind. I know that I speak my friend's feelings as well as my own, when I say, God forbid, that, the dread of any punishment should ever make any Englishman an accomplice in so corrupting his countrymen, a publick teacher of depravity and barbarity!

Mortifying and horrible as the idea is, I must remind you, gentlemen, that even at that time, even under the reign of Robespierre, my learned

friend, if he had then been attorney general, might have been compelled by some most deplorable necessity, to have come into this court to ask your verdict against the libellers of Barrere and Collot d'Herbois. Mr. Peltier then employed his talents against the enemies of the human race, as he has uniformly and bravely done. I do not believe that any peace, any political considerations, any fear of punishment, would have silenced him. He has shown too much honour and constancy, and intrepidity, to be shaken by such circumstances as these.

My learned friend might then have been compelled to have filed a criminal information against Mr. Peltier, for " wickedly and maliciously intending to vilify and degrade Maximilian Robespierre, president of the committee of publick safety of the French Republick!" He might have been reduced to the sad necessity of appearing before you to bely his own better feelings; to prosecute Mr. Peltier for publishing those sentiments which my friend himself had a thousand times felt, and a thousand times expressed. He might have been obliged even to call for punishment upon Mr. Peltier for language which he and all mankind would for ever despise Mr. Peltier if he were not to employ. Then indeed, gentlemen, we should have seen the last humiliation fall on England; the tribunals, the spotless and venerable tribunals of this free country, reduced to be the ministers of the vengence of Robespierre! What could have rescued us from this last disgrace? The honesty and courage of a jury. They would have delivered the judges of this country from the dire necessity of inflicting punishment on a brave and virtuous man, becaue he spoke truth of a monster. They would have despised the threats of a foreign tyrant as their ancestors braved the power of oppression at home.

In the court where we are now met, Cromwell twice sent a satirist on his tyranny to be convicted and punished as a libeller, and in this court, almost in sight of the scaffold streaming with the blood of his sovereign, within hearing of the clash of his bayonets

which drove out parliament with contumely, two successive juries rescued the intripid satirist * from his fangs, and sent out with defeat and disgrace the usurper's attorney general from what he had the insolence to call *his* court! Even then, gentlemen, when all law and liberty were trampled under the feet of a military banditti; when those great crimes were perpetrated on a high place and with a high hand against those who were the objects of publick veneration, which more than any thing else, break their spirits and confound their moral sentiments, obliterate the distinctions between right and wrong in their understanding, and teach the multitude to feel no longer any reverence for that justice which they thus see triumphantly dragged at the chariot wheels of a tyrant; even then, when this unhappy country, triumphant indeed abroad but enslaved at home, had no prospect but that of a long succession of tyrants wading through slaughter to a throne—even then, I say, when all seemed lost, the unconquerable spirit of English liberty survived in the hearts of English jurors. That spirit is, I trust in God, not extinct; and if any modern tyrant were, in the drunkenness of his insolence, to hope to overawe an English jury, I trust and I believe that they would tell him: "Our ancestors braved the bayonets of Cromwell; we bid defiance to yours. *Contempsi Catalinæ gladios—non pertimescam tuos!*"

What could be such a tyrant's means of overawing a jury? A slong as their country exists, they are girt round with impenetrable armour. Till the destruction of their country no danger can fall upon them for the performance of their duty, and I do trust that there is no Englishman so unworthy of life as to desire to outlive England. But if any of us are condemned to the cruel punishment of surviving our country—if in the inscrutable counsels of Providence, this favoured seat of justice and liberty, this noblest work of human wisdom and virtue, be destined to destruction, which I shall not be charged with national prejudice for

* Lilburne.

saying would be the most dangerous wound ever inflicted on civilisation; at least let us carry with us into our sad exile the consolation that we ourselves have not violated the rights of hospitality to exiles,—that we have not torn from the altar the suppliant who claimed protection as the voluntary victim of loyalty and conscience!

Gentlemen, I now leave this unfortunate gentleman in your hands. His character and his situation might interest your humanity; but, on his behalf, I only ask justice from you. I only ask a favourable construction of what cannot be said to be more than ambiguous language, and this you will soon be told from the highest authority is a part of justice.

LORD CHATHAM'S SPEECH

IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS, ON THE ADDRESS TO THE THRONE, AT THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT, ON THE 18TH OF NOVEMBER, 1777.

THE title of the present speech sufficiently indicates the occasion on which it was delivered. Though made in the lingering season of decrepit age, and under the severest pangs of disease, it displays undiminished, the excellences of Chatham's eloquence. It would, indeed, be difficult to find, in the whole range of parliamentary history, a more splendid blaze of genius at once rapid, vigorous, and exalted. This speech was among the last efforts of this distinguished statesman. Death, soon afterwards terminated his glorious career.

SPEECH, &c.

I RISE, my lords, to declare my sentiments on this most solemn and serious subject. It has imposed a load upon my mind, which, I fear, nothing can remove; but which impels me to endeavour its alleviation, by a free and unreserved communication of my sentiments.

In the first part of the address, I have the honour of heartily concurring with the noble earl who moved it. No man feels sincerer joy than I do; none can offer more genuine congratulation on every acces-

sion of strength to the protestant succession. I therefore join in every congratulation on the birth of another princess, and the happy recovery of her majesty. But I must stop here. My courtly complaisance will carry me no further. I will not join in congratulation on misfortune and disgrace. I cannot concur in a blind and servile address, which approves, and endeavours to sanctify the monstrous measures which have heaped disgrace and misfortune upon us. This, my lords, is a perilous and tremendous moment! It is not a time for adulation. The smoothness of flattery cannot now avail; cannot save us in this rugged and awful crisis. It is now necessary to instruct the throne in the language of truth. We must dispel the delusion and the darkness which envelop it; and display, in its full danger and true colours, the ruin that is brought to our doors.

This, my lords, is our duty. It is the proper function of this noble assembly, sitting, as we do, upon our honours in this house, the hereditary council of the crown. *Who* is the minister—*where* is the minister, that has dared to suggest to the throne the contrary, unconstitutional language this day delivered from it?——The accustomed language from the throne has been application to parliament for advice, and a reliance on its constitutional advice and assistance. As it is the right of parliament to give, so it is the duty of the crown to ask it. But on this day, and in this extreme momentous exigency, no reliance is reposed on our constitutional counsels! no advice is asked from the sober and enlightened care of parliament! but the crown, from itself, and by itself, declares an unalterable determination to pursue measures—and what measures, my lords?—The measures that have produced the imminent perils that threaten us; the measures that have brought ruin to our doors.

Can the minister of the day now presume to expect a continuance of support, in this ruinous infatuation? Can parliament be so dead to its dignity and its duty, as to be thus deluded into the loss of

the one and the violation of the other?——To give an unlimited credit and support for the steady perseverance in measures not proposed for our parliamentary advice, but dictated and forced upon us—in measures, I say, my lords, which have reduced this late flourishing empire to ruin and contempt!—"But yesterday, and England might have stood against the world: now none so poor to do her reverence." I use the words of a poet; but though it be poetry it is no fiction. It is a shameful truth, that not only the power and strength of this country are wasting away and expiring; but her well earned glories, her true honour, and substantial dignity are sacrificed. France, my lords, has insulted you; she has encouraged and sustained America; and whether America be wrong or right, the dignity of this county ought to spurn at the officious insult of French interference. The ministers and ambassadours of those who are called rebels and enemies, are in Paris; in Paris they transact the reciprocal interests of America and France. Can there be a more mortifying insult? Can even our ministers sustain a more humiliating disgrace? Do they dare to resent it? Do they presume even to hint a vindication of their honour, and the dignity of the state, by requiring the dismission of the plenipotentiaries of America? Such is the degradation to which they have reduced the glories of England! The people whom they affect to call contemptible rebels, but whose growing power has at last obtained the name of enemies; the people with whom they have engaged this country in war, and against whom they now command our implicit support in every measure of desperate hostility: this people, despised as rebels, or acknowledged as enemies, are abetted against you, supplied with every military store, their interests consulted, and their ambassadours entertained, by your inveterate enemy! and our ministers dare not interpose with dignity or effect. Is this the honour of a great kingdom? Is this the indignant spirit of England, who, "but yesterday," gave law to the house

of Bourbon? My lords, the dignity of nations demands a decisive conduct in a situation like this. Even when the greatest prince that perhaps this country ever saw, filled our throne, the requisition of a Spanish general on a similar subject, was attended to, and complied with. For, on the spirited remonstrance of the Duke of Alva, Elizabeth found herself obliged to deny the Flemish exiles all countenance, support, or even entrance into her dominions; and the Count le Marque, with his few desperate followers, were expelled the kingdom. Happening to arrive at the Brille, and finding it weak in defence, they made themselves masters of the place: and this was the foundation of the United Provinces.

My lords, this ruinous and ignominious situation, where we cannot act with success, nor suffer with honour, calls upon us to remonstrate in the strongest and loudest language of truth, to rescue the ear of majesty from the delusions which surround it. The desperate state of our arms abroad is in part known: no man thinks more highly of them than I do. I love and honour the English troops. I know their virtues and their valour. I know they can achieve any thing except impossibilities; and I know that the conquest of English America *is an impossibility*. You cannot, I venture to say it, *you cannot* conquer America. Your armies last war effected every thing that could be effected; and what was it? It cost a numerous army, under the command of a most able general,* now a noble lord in this house, a long and laborious campaign, to expel five thousand Frenchmen from French America. My lords, *you cannot conquer America*. What is your present situation there? We do not know the worst; but we know, that in three campaigns we have done nothing and suffered much. Besides the sufferings, perhaps *total loss*, of the northern force†; the best appointed army that ever took the field commanded by sir William Howe,

* Sir Jeffery (now lord) Amherst.

† General Burgoyne's army.

has retired from the American lines. *He was obliged* to relinquish his attempt, and with great delay and danger, to adopt a new and distant plan of operations. We shall soon know, and in any event have reason to lament, what may have happened since. As to conquest, therefore, my lords, I repeat, it is impossible. You may swell every expense, and every effort, still more extravagantly; pile and accumulate every assistance you can buy or borrow; traffick and barter with every little pitiful German prince, that sells and sends his subjects to the shambles of a foreign prince; your efforts are for ever vain and impotent: doubly so from this mercenary aid on which you rely. For it irritates, to an incurable resentment, the minds of your enemies—to overrun them with the mercenary sons of rapine and plunder; devoting them and their possessions to the rapacity of hireling cruelty! If I were an American, as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I never would lay down my arms—never—never—never.

Your own army is infected with the contagion of these illiberal allies. The spirit of plunder and of rapine is gone forth among them. I know it—and notwithstanding what the noble earl,* who moved the address, has given as his opinion of our American army, I know from authentick information, and the *most experienced officers*, that our discipline is deeply wounded. Whilst this is notoriously our sinking situation, America grows and flourishes: whilst our strength and discipline are lowered, hers are rising and improving.

But, my lords, who is the man, that in addition to these disgraces and mischiefs of our army, has dared to authorize and associate to our arms the tomahawk and scalping knife of the savage? To call into civilized alliance, the wild and inhuman savage of the woods; to delegate to the merciless Indian, the defence of disputed rights, and to wage the horrours of his barbarous war against our brethren?

* Lord Percy.

My lords, these enormities cry aloud for redress and punishment. Unless thoroughly done away, it will be a stain on the national character. It is a violation of the constitution. I believe it is against law. It is not the least of our national misfortunes, that the strength and character of our army are thus impaired. Infected with the mercenary spirit of robbery and rapine; familiarized to the horrid scenes of savage cruelty, it can no longer boast of the noble and generous principles which dignify a soldier; no longer sympathize with the dignity of the royal banner, nor feel the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war, "that make ambition virtue!" What makes ambition virtue?—the sense of honour. But is the sense of honour consistent with a spirit of plunder, or the practice of murder? Can it flow from mercenary motives, or can it prompt to cruel deeds? Besides these murderers and plunderers, let me ask our ministers, what other allies have they acquired? What *other powers* have they associated to their cause? Have they entered into alliance with the *king of the gypsies?* Nothing, my lords, is too low or too ludicrous to be consistent with their counsels.

The independent views of America have been stated and asserted as the foundation of this address. My lords, no man wishes for the due dependance of America on this country more than I do. To preserve it, and not confirm that state of independence into which *your measures* hitherto have *driven* them, is the object which we ought to unite in attaining. The Americans, contending for their rights against arbitrary exactions, I love and admire. It is the struggle of free and virtuous patriots; but contending for independency and total disconnexion from England, as an Englishman, I cannot wish them success. For, in a due constitutional dependency, including the ancient supremacy of this country in regulating their commerce and navigation, consists the mutual happiness and prosperity both of England and America. She derived assistance and protection from us; and we reaped from her the most important advantages:

She was, indeed, the fountain of our wealth, the nerve of our strength, the nursery and basis of our naval power. It is our duty, therefore, my lords, if we wish to save our country, most seriously to endeavour the recovery of these most beneficial subjects: and in this perilous crisis, perhaps the present moment may be the only one in which we can hope for success. For in their negotiations with France they have, or think they have, reason to complain, though it be notorious that they have received from that power, important supplies and assistance of various kinds, yet it is certain they expected it in a more decisive and immediate degree. America is in ill humour with France, on some points that have not entirely answered her expectations. Let us wisely take advantage of every possible moment of reconciliation. Besides, the natural disposition of America herself still leans towards England; to the old habits of connexion and mutual interest that united both countries. This *was* the established sentiment of all the continent; and still, my lords, in the great and principal part, the sound part of America, this wise and affectionate disposition prevails; and there is a very considerable part of America yet sound—the middle and the southern provinces; some parts may be factious and blind to their true interests; but if we express a wise and benevolent disposition to communicate with them those immutable rights of nature, and those constitutional liberties, to which they are equally entitled with ourselves; by a conduct so just and humane, we shall confirm the favourable, and conciliate the adverse. I say, my lords, the rights and liberties to which they are equally entitled, with ourselves, but no more. I would participate to them every enjoyment and freedom which the colonizing subjects of a free state can possess, or wish to possess; and I do not see why they should not enjoy every fundamental right in their property, and every original substantial liberty, which Devonshire or Surry, or the county I live in, or any other county in England, can claim; reserving always, as the sacred right of the mother country, the due constitutional

dependency of the colonies. The inherent supremacy of the state in regulating and protecting the navigation and commerce of all her subjects, is necessary for the mutual benefit and preservation of every part, to constitute and preserve the prosperous arrangement of the whole empire.

The sound parts of America, of which I have spoken, must be sensible of these great truths, and of their real interests. America is not in that state of desperate and contemptible rebellion which this country has been deluded to believe. It is not a wild and lawless banditti, who, having nothing to lose, might hope to snatch something from publick convulsions. Many of their leaders and great men have a great stake in this great contest. The gentleman who conducts their armies, I am told, has an estate of four or five thousand pounds a year; and when I consider these things, I cannot but lament the inconsiderate violence of our penal acts, our declarations of treason and rebellion, with all the fatal effects of attainder and confiscation.

As to the disposition of foreign powers which is asserted to be pacifick* and friendly, let us judge, my lords, rather by their actions and the nature of things, than by interested assertions. The uniform assistance, supplied to America by France, suggests a different conclusion. The most important interests of France, in aggrandizing and enriching herself with what she most wants, supplies of every naval store from America, must inspire her with different sentiments. The extraordinary preparations of the house of Bourbon, by land and by sea, from Dunkirk to the Streights, equally ready and willing to overwhelm these defenceless islands, should rouse us to a sense of their real disposition, and our own danger. Not five thousand troops in England!—hardly three thousand in Ireland! What can we oppose to the combined force of our enemies?—Scarcely twenty ships of the line fully or sufficiently manned, that any ad-

* In the king's speech.

miral's reputation would permit him to take the command of. The river of Lisbon in the possession of our enemies! The seas swept by American privateers. Our channel trade torn to pieces by them! In this complicated crisis of danger, weakness at home, and calamity abroad, terrified and insulted by the neighbouring powers, unable to act in America, or acting only to be destroyed, where is the man with the forehead to promise or hope for success in such a situation? or, from perseverance in the measures that have driven us to it? Who has the forehead to do so? Where is that man? I should be glad to see his face.

You cannot *conciliate* America by your present measures. You cannot *subdue* her by your present, or by any measures. What, then, can you do? You cannot conquer; you cannot gain; but you can *address;* you can lull the fears and anxieties of the moment into an ignorance of the danger that should produce them. But, my lords, the time demands the language of truth. We must not now apply the flattering unction of servile compliance, or blind complaisance. In a just and necessary war, to maintain the rights or honour of my country, I would strip the shirt from my back to support it. But in such a war as this, unjust in its principle, impracticable in its means, and ruinous in its consequences, I would not contribute a single effort, nor a single shilling. I do not call for vengeance on the heads of those who have been guilty: I only recommend to them to make their retreat. Let them walk off; and let them make haste, or they may be assured that speedy and condign punishment will overtake them.

My lords, I have submitted to you, with the freedom and truth which I think my duty, my sentiments on your present awful situation. I have laid before you the ruin of your power, the disgrace of your reputation, the pollution of your discipline, the contamination of your morals, the complication of calamities, foreign and domestick, that overwhelm your sinking country. Your dearest interests, your

own liberties, the constitution itself, totters to the foundation. All this disgraceful danger, this multitude of misery, is the monstrous offspring of this unnatural war. We have been deceived and deluded too long. Let us now stop short. This is the crisis—the only crisis,* of time and situation, to give us a possibility of escape from the fatal effects of our delusions. But if in an obstinate and infatuated perseverance in folly, we slavishly echo the peremptory words this day presented to us, nothing can save this devoted country from complete and final ruin. We madly rush into multiplied miseries and "confusion worse confounded."

Is it possible, can it be believed, that ministers are yet blind to this impending destruction?—I did hope, that instead of this false and empty vanity, this overweening pride, engendering high conceits, and presumptuous imaginations, that ministers would have humbled themselves in their errours, would have confessed and retracted them, and by an active, though a late repentance, have endeavoured to redeem them. But, my lords, since they had neither sagacity to foresee, nor justice nor humanity to shun these oppressive calamities; since, not even severe experience can make them feel, nor the imminent ruin of their country awaken them from their stupefaction, the guardian care of parliament must interpose. I shall therefore, my lords, propose to you an amendment to the address to his majesty, to be inserted immediately after the two first paragraphs of congratulation on the birth of a princess, to recommend an immediate cessation of hostilities, and the commencement of a treaty to restore peace and liberty to America, strength and happiness to England, security

* It cannot have escaped observation, with what urgent anxiety the noble speaker has pressed this point throughout his speech: the critical necessity of instantly treating with America. But the warning voice was heard in vain; the address triumphed; parliament adjourned; ministers enjoyed the festive recess of a long Christmas; and America ratified her alliance with France.

and permanent prosperity to both countries.—This, my lords, is yet in our power; and let not the wisdom and justice of your lordships neglect the happy, and, perhaps the only opportunity. By the establishment of irrevocable law, founded on mutual rights, and ascertained by treaty, these glorious enjoyments may be firmly perpetuated. And let me repeat to your lordships, that the strong bias of America, at least of the wise and sounder parts of it, naturally inclines to this happy and constitutional reconnexion with you. Notwithstanding the temporary intrigues with France, we may still be assured of their ancient and confirmed partiality to us. America and France cannot be congenial. There is something decisive and confirmed in the honest American, that will not assimilate to the futility and levity of Frenchmen.

My lords, to encourage and confirm that innate inclination to this country, founded on every principle of affection, as well as consideration of interest; to restore that favourable disposition into a permanent and powerful reunion with this country; to revive the mutual strength of the empire; again to awe the house of Bourbon, instead of meanly truckling, as our present calamities compel us, to every insult of French caprice, and Spanish punctilio; to reestablish our commerce; to reassert our rights and our honour; to confirm our interests, and renew our glories for ever, a consummation most devoutly to be endeavoured! and which, I trust, may yet arise from reconciliation with America; I have the honour of submitting to you the following amendment, which I move to be inserted after the two first paragraphs of the address.

"*And that this house does most humbly advise and supplicate his majesty, to be pleased to cause the most speedy and effectual measures to be taken, for restoring peace in America: and that no time may be lost in proposing an immediate cessation of hostilities there, in order to the opening of a treaty for the final settlement of the tranquillity of these invaluable provinces, by a removal of the unhappy causes of this ruinous civil*

war; and by a just and adequate security against the return of the like calamities in times to come. And this house desire to offer the most dutiful assurances to his majesty, that they will, in due time, cheerfully co-operate with the magnanimity and tender goodness of his majesty, for the preservation of his people, by such explicit and most solemn declarations, and provisions of fundamental and revocable laws, as may be judged necesssary for the ascertaining and fixing for ever the respective rights of Great Britain and her colonies."

In the course of this debate, Lord Suffolk, secretary for the northern department, undertook to defend the employment of the Indians in the war. His lordship contended, that, besides its *policy* and *necessity*, the measure was also allowable on *principle*. For that "it was perfectly justifiable to use all the means that *God and nature put into our hands!*"

I AM ASTONISHED! (exclaimed Lord Chatham, as he rose)—shocked! to hear such principles confessed—to hear them avowed in this house, or in this country: principles equally unconstitutional, inhuman, and unchristian!

My lords, I did not intend to have encroached again upon your attention; but I cannot repress my indignation. I feel myself impelled by every duty. My lords, we are called upon as members of this house, as men, as Christian men, to protest against such notions standing near the throne, polluting the ear of majesty. "That God and nature put into our hands!" I know not what ideas that lord may entertain of God and nature; but I know that such abominable principles are equally abhorrent to religion and humanity. What! to attribute the sacred sanction of God and nature to the massacres of the Indian scalping knife—to the cannibal savage torturing, murdering, roasting, and eating; literally, my lords, *eating* the mangled victims of his barbarous battles! Such horrible notions shock every precept of religion, divine or natural, and every generous feeling of humanity. And, my lords, they shock every sentiment

of honour; they shock me as a lover of honourable war, and a detester of murderous barbarity.

These abominable principles, and this more abominable avowal of them, demand the most decisive indignation. I call upon that right reverend bench, those holy ministers of the gospel, and pious pastors of our church; I conjure them to join in the holy work, and vindicate the religion of their God. I appeal to the wisdom and the law of *this learned* bench, to defend and support the justice of their country. I call upon the bishops, to interpose the unsullied sanctity of their lawn; upon the learned judges, to interpose the purity of their ermine, to save us from this pollution. I call upon the honour of your lordships, to reverence the dignity of your ancestors, and to maintain your own. I call upon the spirit and humanity of my country, to vindicate the national character. I invoke the genius of the constitution. From the tapestry that adorns these walls, the immortal ancestor of this noble lord* frowns with indignation at the disgrace of his country. In vain he led your victorious fleets against the boasted Armada of Spain; in vain he defended and established the honour, the liberties, the religion, the *protestant religion*, of this country, against the arbitrary cruelties of popery and the inquisition, if these more than popish cruelties and inquisitorial practices are let loose among us; to turn forth into our settlements, among our ancient connexions, friends, and relations, the merciless cannibal, thirsting for the blood of man, woman, and child! to send forth the infidel savage—against whom? against your protestant brethren; to lay waste their country, to desolate their dwellings, and extirpitate their race and name, with these horrible hell-hounds of savage war!—*hell-hounds, I say, of savage war.* Spain armed herself with blood-hounds to extirpate the wretched natives of

* Lord Effingham.—Lord Effingham Howard was lord high admiral of England against the Spanish armada; the destruction of which is represented in the tapestry.

America; and we improve on the inhuman example even of Spanish cruelty: we turn loose these savage hell hounds against our brethren and countrymen in America, of the same language, laws, liberties, and religion; endeared to us by every tie that should sanctify humanity.

My lords, this awful subject, so important to our honour, our constitution, and our religion, demands the most solemn and effectual inquiry. And I again call upon your lordships, and the united powers of the state, to examine it thoroughly and decisively, and to stamp upon it an indelible stigma of the publick abhorrence. And I again implore those holy prelates of our religion, to do away these iniquities from among us. Let them perform a lustration; let them purify this house, and this country, from this sin.

My lords, I am old and weak, and at present unable to say more; but my feelings and indignation were too strong to have said less. I could not have slept this night in my bed, nor reposed my head on my pillow, without giving this vent to my eternal abhorrence of such preposterous and enormous principles.

This speech had no effect. The address was agreed to.

LORD NORTH'S SPEECH

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON A MOTION OF INQUIRY INTO THE STATE OF THE NATION, MADE IN THE YEAR 1779.

DISTINGUISHED as Lord North confessedly was by the frequent exercise of the happiest powers of debate, there scarcely now exists a memorial of his eloquence. We have discovered amidst a mass of "threads and patches," a single speech, which seems to have some claims to authenticity, and of being accurately reported. It was delivered in a discussion on the "state of the nation," which took place on a motion made by Mr. Fox. The speech contains a very skilful vindication of himself, and of the measures of the ministry to which he belonged. It is, indeed, a model of its kind. Cool and dispassionate, it repels the violent invective, and rash criminations of his adversaries by a candid exhibition of facts, and a masterly application of arguments. This was the character of his eloquence. By pursuing a course so temperate, so discreet, so ingenuous, he often succeeded in disarming the virulence of opposition, and of compelling them to exchange their angry passions for a spirit relenting and conciliatory.

SPEECH, &c.

MR. SPEAKER,

I AM much indebted to my learned friend, the attorney general,* near me, for the very favourable sentiments he has this day expressed of my publick services; much more, I fear, than I have any pretensions to. On that subject he has, perhaps, spoke with the partiality of a friend; on others, he has, I presume, given his opinion without any such bias. But how much soever I may be obliged to the learned gentleman, I cannot help rising on the present occasion, earnestly wishing to vindicate my character against the general and specifick accusation made by the honourable gentleman† over the way; and likewise to assure that honourable gentleman, that my present situation, sentiments, and intentions, will not permit me to accept of those friendly dispositions which he has been so kind as to mix with the general charges. I allude to the admonitions he has given to me for the regulation of my future political conduct. His charges being general and unqualified, deserve some answer. He has stated them with his usual ability. He has pressed them with his wonted eloquence. However unequal I may be to the honourable gentleman in these two respects, I must not, therefore, decline the vindication of my character, if I am conscious the justice of my cause will bear me out. Without that support, I am convinced of my own inability; with that support I have nothing to fear from the honourable gentleman's eloquence and ingenuity. The honourable gentleman has travelled through the whole of my ministerial conduct, and candidly imputes all the neglects and blunders of administration, as he calls them, to me. By his account, I have enough of my own to answer for, without being compelled to bear the blame due to others; but I will tell that gentleman, that I do not mean to fly from

* Mr. Thurlow. † Mr. Fox.

that state of responsibility attached to my office, nor from the general responsibility which I am bound to with others, as one of his majesty's confidential servants. If the honourable gentleman, which his speech would indicate, supposes me to be first, or *sole minister*, I do assure him he is mistaken. I know of no such minister in this country, and do therefore hope the honourable gentleman will consider me in two lights, namely, as acting at the head of a very important department, where I acknowledge I am solely answerable for whatever is transacted, and as acting in concert with others in his majesty's confidential councils.

The honourable gentleman has gone a great way back, no less than to the whole of my conduct since I got connected with the board at which I have, at present, the honour to preside. I found the affairs of this country in great confusion, and the nation in a ferment.* I took a share in government when embarrassed by a strong factious opposition, who I thought, as I still do, acted upon mistaken or wrong motives. I assisted in maintaining government, and if the clamours current at that time were not silenced, they were rendered ineffectual to answer the purposes for which they were raised. The great and glorious victories of the late war, and our confessed and decided superiority on the ocean, created us many enemies, and an alarm in other parts of Europe; and if not enmity, at least coolness.

France and Spain, suffering under the disgrace of successive defeats, were mortified and filled with resentment, and looking forward to retaliation. The eyes of the rest of Europe were drawn from the usual object of their jealousy, the house of Bourbon, thus fallen and humbled, towards our growing greatness. The system of Europe, at the time, admitted of no continental alliances, for to what end could they have been directed? The powers of the north were friendly inclined, and nothing at that period, gave any reason

* Alluding to the Middlesex election.

to counteract any probable or possible measures which might be entered into by the house of Bourbon. Such was the state and disposition of Europe, when America unjustly, and without provocation, resisted the constitutional claims of this country, and refused to pay that obedience which it was bound to render upon every principle of justice; nay, I might go further, and add, upon every motive of interest and advantage. Under the circumstances I have described, we were obliged to enter into a contest with rebellious subjects. I shall neither take blame to myself, nor impute any to others; but before we had it in our power to enforce legal government, France, contrary to every assurance and every principle of justice and good faith, traitorously interfered in the interval in the government of the British empire, and had the insolence, not only to prescribe the conduct we should observe towards our own subjects, but, by declaring the colonies independent, endeavoured to sever a third part of the empire, and wrest it out of our hands.

The honourable gentleman says: Why not resign at this—why not resign at that—why not resign at another period? I will tell the honourable gentleman, why I neither did, nor could resign. I was always determined never to resign as long as his majesty thought fit to accept of my poor services, and till I could do it with honour. Could I have resigned with honour when America first resisted? I answer no. Could I have resigned with honour in the prosecution of the American war, while the event of that war was yet depending? No. Could I have resigned with honour when France interfered and acknowledged American independency? Most certainly not. And ought I to resign at this period, or could I do it with honour to myself, or discharge my duty to my country, now we have the united force of the house of Bourbon to contend with? I am persuaded I could not. My language has always been uniformly the same, never to resign till a fit person was found to succeed me. I have not heard that person yet pointed

out, nor do I know him. I am well convinced, that many persons of abilities, infinitely superiour to mine, could be found. I know no man more fit, in some respects, than the honourable gentleman himself; but his abilities, as far as they respect me, are out of the present question. He and his friends think differently from me on matters of very essential importance. I hope I have as great a reverence for the constitution as that gentleman; but his ideas are not perhaps exactly consonant to mine on that subject. I am for supporting the just and constitutional prerogatives of the crown, and the rights of parliament, according to the best of my own judgment; and upon these opinions I must continue to act, and can never, consequently, consent to call in any set of men, be they whom they may, as far as my feeble voice can reach, of whose political doctrines I do not approve. The good of my country, and my own honour, therefore, will not permit me to follow the honourable gentleman's advice, and subscribe to his opinion, that this is the proper time for me to resign. The honourable gentleman, after reprobating the whole of my publick conduct, is pleased to hold out several strong inducements to me to retire from publick business. He offers me a full indemnity for all my past crimes and transgressions, as a publick man, for which I am greatly indebted to him, though, unfortunately, I cannot, or will not follow the advice thus given. He desires me to retire with the *plunder* I have amassed.* He says, in order to save his country, in which my resignation is included, that he would consent to let me, though a state criminal, escape with impunity; but he has coupled this very *generous* offer with a threat. He added, if I should not retire after this wholesome and friendly warning, that I must expect, in case of future disasters, to be brought to publick judgment, and to exemplary and condign punishment.

* Mr. Fox said, not *plunder*, but *fortune*.

The honourable gentleman's advice is *generous* and *friendly*. His threat is accompanied with openness, and is candid and manly. He has given me my option, and he will permit me to take it. But, in the first place, as I am conscious of no crime, I cannot from any motive of common sense or common prudence, accept of the proffered indemnity; neither can I, from the same reason, fear a publick trial, or the consequences of guilt, the threatened punishment denounced, in order to terrify me into a resignation.

On the contrary, there is nothing, at a proper time, I more ardently desire than a publick trial; nor any thing I less fear than publick punishment. I have been publicly accused in this house, in the face of the nation. Justice requires that I should be indulged with an opportunity of exculpating myself. I shall insist upon the exercise of that justice. I hope I shall not be refused. I shall and must be tried, be the event of the present measures what they may. So that, however well intended the honourable gentleman's offer may have been, his favour of indemnity and impunity would amount to actual punishment, and his threats of future trial would be to me the greatest favour it is in his power to confer.

The honourable gentleman has indeed held me forth in a new point of view this day. He presumes that France, Spain, and I, are the only foes this country has at present to combat. The people of America are our stedfast friends; and were I removed from my present situation, a perfect unanimity, he says, would take place immediately, and every heart and hand in the kingdom would instantly unite in the common defence, and in inflicting that species of chastisement on the whole house of Bourbon, which it has so justly merited, for its perfidious and ambitious conduct.

I wish I was as well convinced of the truth of his opinion as the honourable gentleman. I do assure him, if I were, the power and glory of this country would be soon restored, and upon terms which would

appear to me extremely cheap: I mean, my immediate resignation, and the consequent welfare and prosperity of my country. Nay, I would make real sacrifices, in order to procure so desirable an event. I would instantly apply for banishment, and while I lamented, or rather felt, in some unguarded moment for my immediate situation, I would be a thousand times over *repaid* in the luxurious reflection, that by my proscription I had purchased the salvation of my country, and restored it once more to its former state and dignity.

However, to return to the mere matter of resignation, I beg leave to impress these facts on the honourable gentleman. It is well known that I accepted of my present situation with great reluctance; that I have remained in it much against my own good judgment and liking; that I feel in the same manner at the instant I am speaking; and when the period arrives, that I can resign with honour to myself, and consistent with the duty I owe to my sovereign and my country, I shall quit my present office with singular satisfaction.

The honourable gentleman has spoken of the fortune which he presumes I have amassed since my entering into office. I thought it was *plundered:* but I beg the honourable gentleman's pardon, for he has explained it otherwise. Another honourable gentleman, over the way, said yesterday evening in debate, that the British cabinet had been *bought and sold.* So far as the charge applies to pecuniary matters, a very few words will, I trust, satisfy the house.

When I came into office my private fortune was not very considerable; and I can affirm, be it what it might then, whenever I quit my present situation, now or at any future period, I shall not be richer. That, I presume, if my assertion gains credit, is a full answer to the charge of my amassing a fortune, so far as the charge may be supposed to affect or be applicable to me, of the British cabinet having been bought or sold.

The honourable gentleman has laboured a great deal to show how culpable ministers have been for not securing *alliances* on the continent. For my part, as applicable to our insular situation, and the general state of Europe, I was not able to perceive, that any eligible alliance presented itself in Europe, but one with Russia; and if matters had not suddenly assumed an unexpected appearance, an alliance of that kind might probably have taken place. The situation of affairs was this. An armistice, or truce, had taken place between Russia and the Porte. While the final settlement of the respective claims of the two courts was depending, it was the *interest* of Russia to stand *well* with the court of London, on account of Great Britain having it in her power to give her succour and protection in the Mediterranean. In this state of affairs the French minister at Constantinople was fixed upon as the common mediator between the negotiating powers. The consequence of this mediation between the Porte and the court of Petersburgh was, a final adjustment of all their differences. The court of Petersburgh having no further point to carry in the Mediterranean, had no motives to enter into an alliance with the court of Great Britain, which might again, perhaps, from secret engagements between France and the Porte, involve her in another war with the last mentioned power.

I have one word more to add, and that is respecting the distribution of our force. The honourable gentleman has condemned it in the lump and in detail. I do not pretend to oppose my opinion to that of professional men, but as far as I am able to determine, it appears to me, uninstructed and uninformed as I am, that neglecting our distant dependencies would amount to a surrender of all our distant possessions. The clear consequence of which must be, that of our being shut up in this island, merely to resist conquest and foreign dominion. I presume no honourable gentleman present would wish to risk every thing upon so hazardous an event. It can therefore, in my apprehension, require very

little argument to prove, that we should not, in the early stages of a trying contest, adopt measures, which, if proper in any exigency, ought to be resorted to only in the very last extremity.

I will not pursue the argument further. There is, in my opinion, no cause for despondency. The land force, which we have already established, militia, and regulars, is certainly equal to our defence at home. What we have in America, should France and Spain endeavour to preserve a superiority in Europe, holds out the fairest prospects of success. If they should not, we shall be able to spare sufficient detachments to secure a decided superiority in that part of the world.

LORD CHATHAM'S SPEECH

IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS, THE 11TH OF DECEMBER, 1777, AGAINST A MOTION OF ADJOURNMENT.

IT having been moved by one of the ministry, that parliament should adjourn for six weeks, Lord Chatham arose and delivered the subsequent speech, in which the proposition is resisted with more than an ordinary degree of vehemence and ardour. The motion however was carried.

SPEECH, &c.

IT is not with less grief than astonishment I hear the motion now made by the noble earl, at a time when the affairs of this country present on every side prospects full of awe, terrour, and impending danger; when, I will be bold to say, events of a most alarming tendency, little expected or foreseen, will shortly happen; when a cloud that may crush this nation, and bury it in destruction for ever, is ready to burst and overwhelm us in ruin. At so tremendous a season, it does not become your lordships, the great hereditary council of the nation, to neglect your duty, to retire to your country seats for six weeks, in quest of joy and merriment, while the real state of publick affairs calls for grief, mourning, and lamentation; at least, for the fullest exertions of your wisdom. It is your duty, my lords, as the grand hereditary council of the nation, to advise your sove-

reign, to be the protectors of your country, to feel your own weight and authority. As hereditary counsellors, as members of this house, you stand between the crown and the people; you are nearer the throne than the other branch of the legislature; it is your duty to surround and protect, to counsel and supplicate it. You hold the balance. Your duty is to see that the weights are properly poized, that the balance remains even, that neither may encroach on the other, and that the executive power may be prevented, by an unconstitutional exertion of even constitutional authority, from bringing the nation to destruction. My lords, I fear we are arrived at the very brink of that state; and I am persuaded that nothing short of a spirited interposition on your part, in giving speedy and wholesome advice to your sovereign, can prevent the people from feeling beyond remedy the full effects of that ruin which ministers have brought upon us. These calamitous circumstances ministers have been the cause of: and shall we, in such a state of things, when every moment teems with events productive of the most fatal narratives, shall we trust, during an adjournment of six weeks, to those men who have brought those calamities upon us, when, perhaps, our utter overthrow is plotting, nay ripe for execution, without almost a possibility of prevention? Ten thousand brave men have fallen victims to ignorance and rashness. The only army you have in America may, by this time, be no more. This very nation remains no longer safe than its enemies think proper to permit. I do not augur ill. Events of a most critical nature may take place before our next meeting. Will your lordships, then, in such a state of things, trust to the guidance of men, who in every single step of this cruel, this wicked war, from the very beginning, have proved themselves weak, ignorant, and mistaken? I will not say, my lords, nor do I mean any thing personal, or that they have brought premeditated ruin on this country. I will not suppose that they foresaw what has since happened; but I do contend, my lords, that their want of wisdom, their

incapacity, their temerity in depending on their own judgment, or their base compliances with the orders and dictates of others, perhaps caused by the influence of one or two individuals, have rendered them totally unworthy of your lordships' confidence, of the confidence of parliament, and those whose rights they are the constitutional guardians of, the people at large. A remonstrance, my lords, should be carried to the throne. The king has been deluded by his ministers. They have been imposed on by false information, or have, from motives best known to themselves, given apparent credit to what they have been convinced in their hearts was untrue. The nation has been betrayed into the ruinous measure of an American war by the arts of imposition, by their own credulity, through the means of false hopes, false pride, and promised advantages, of the most romantick and improbable nature. My lords, I do not wish to call your attention entirely to that point. I would fairly appeal to your own sentiments, whether I can be justly charged with arrogance or presumption, if I said, great and able as ministers think themselves, that all the wisdom of the nation is not confined to the narrow circle of their petty cabinet. I might, I think, without presumption, say, that your lordships, as one of the branches of the legislature, may be supposed as capable of advising your sovereign, in the moment of difficulty and danger, as any lesser council, composed of a fewer number; and who, being already so fatally trusted, have betrayed a want of honesty, or a want of talents. Is it, my lords, within the utmost stretch of the most sanguine expectation, that the same men who have plunged you into your present perilous and calamitous situation are the proper persons to rescue you from it? No, my lords, such an expectation would be preposterous and absurd. I say, my lords, you are now specially called upon to interpose. It is your duty to forego every call of business and pleasure, to give up your whole time to inquire into past misconduct; to provide remedies for the present; to prevent future evils; to rest on your arms, if I may

use the expression, to watch for the publick safety; to defend and support the throne, and if fate should so ordain it, to fall with becoming fortitude, with the rest of your fellow subjects, in the general ruin. I fear this last must be the event of this mad, unjust, and cruel war. It is your lordships' duty to do every thing in your power that it shall not—but, if it must be so, I trust your lordships and the nation will fall gloriously.

My lords, as the first and most immediate object of your inquiry, I would recommend to you to consider the true state of our home defence. We have heard much from a noble lord in this house, of the state of our navy. I cannot give an implicit belief to all I have heard on that important subject. I still retain my former opinion relative to the number of line of battle ships; but as an inquiry into the real state of the navy is destined to be the subject of future consideration, I do not wish to hear any more about it till that period arrives. I allow, in argument, that we have thirty-five ships of the line fit for actual service. I doubt much whether such a force would give us full command of the channel. I am certain, if it did, every other part of our possessions must lie naked and defenceless, in every quarter of the globe.

I fear our utter destruction is at hand. * What, my lords, is the state of our military defence? I would not wish to expose our present weakness; but weak as we are, if this war should be continued, as the publick declaration of persons in high confidence with their sovereign would induce us to suppose, is this nation to be entirely stripped? And if it should, would every soldier now in Britain be sufficient to give us an equality to the force of America? I will maintain they would not. Where then will men be procured? Recruits are not to be had in this country. Germany will give no more. I have read in the newspapers of

* Here, and in many other parts of his speech, his lordship broadly hinted, that the house of Bourbon was meditating some important and decisive blow near home.

this day, and I have reason to believe it true, that the head of the Germanick body has remonstrated against it, and has taken measures accordingly to prevent it. Ministers have, I hear, applied to the Swiss Cantons. The idea is preposterous. The Swiss never permit their troops to go beyond sea. But, my lords, even if men were to be procured in Germany, how will you march them to the water side? Have not our ministers applied for the port of Embden, and has it not been refused? I say, you will not be able to procure men even for your home defence, if some immediate steps be not taken. I remember during the last war, it was thought advisable to levy independent companies. They were, when completed, formed into battalions, and proved of great service. I love the army. I know its use. But I must nevertheless own, that I was a great friend to the measure of establishing a national militia. I remember the last war, that there were three camps formed of that corps at once in this kingdom. I saw them myself. One at Winchester, another in the west, at Plymouth; and a third, if I recollect right, at Chatham. Whether the militia is at present in such a state as to answer the valuable purposes it did then, or is capable of being rendered so, I will not pretend to say; but I see no reason why, in such a critical state of affairs, the experiment should not be made, and why it may not be put again on the former respectable footing.* I remember, all circumstances considered, when appearances were not nearly so melancholy and alarming as they are, that there were more troops in the county of Kent alone, for the defence of the kingdom, than there are now in the whole island.

My lords, I contend that we have not, nor can procure, any force sufficient to subdue America. It is monstrous to think of it. There are several noble lords present, well acquainted with military affairs. I call upon any one of them to rise and pledge himself, that the military force now within the kingdom

* This was afterwards done.

is adequate to its defence, or that any possible force to be procured from Germany, Switzerland, or elsewhere, will be equal to the conquest of America. I am too perfectly persuaded of their abilities and integrity to expect any such assistance from them. Oh! But if America is not to be conquered, she may be treated with. Conciliation is at length thought of. Terms are to be offered. Who are the persons that are to treat on the part of this afflicted and deluded country? The very men who have been the authors of our misfortunes. The very men who have endeavoured, by the most pernicious policy, the highest injustice and oppression, the most cruel and devastating war, to enslave those people they would conciliate, to gain the confidence and affection of those who have survived the Indian tomahawk and German bayonet. Can your lordships entertain the most distant prospect of success from such a treaty and such negotiators? No, my lords, the Americans have virtue, and they must detest the principles of such men. They have understanding, and too much wisdom, to trust to the cunning and narrow politicks which must cause such overtures on the part of their merciless persecutors. My lords, I maintain that they would shun, with a mixture of prudence and detestation, any proposition coming from that quarter. They would receive terms from such men, as snares to allure and betray. They would dread them as ropes meant to be put about their legs, in order to entangle and overthrow them in certain ruin. My lords, supposing that our domestick danger, if at all, is far distant; that our enemies will leave us at liberty to prosecute this war to the utmost of our ability; suppose your lordships should grant a fleet one day, an army another: all these, I do affirm, will avail nothing, unless you accompany it with advice. Ministers have been in errour: experience has proved it; and what is worse, they continue it. They told you in the beginning, that 15,000 men would traverse all America, without scarcely an appearance of interruption. Two campaigns have passed since they

gave us this assurance. Treble that number have been employed; and one of your armies, which composed two thirds of the force by which America was to be subdued, has been totally destroyed, and is now led captive through those provinces you call rebellious. Those men whom you called cowards, poltroons, runaways, and knaves, are become victorious over your veteran troops: and, in the midst of victory, and flush of conquest, have set ministers an example of moderation and magnanimity well worthy of imitation.

My lords, no time should be lost which may promise to improve this disposition in America, unless, by an obstinacy founded in madness, we wish to stifle those embers of affection which, after all our savage treatment, do not seem as yet to have been entirely extinguished. While on one side we must lament the unhappy fate of that spirited officer, Mr. Burgoyne, and the gallant troops under his command, who were sacrificed to the wanton temerity and ignorance of ministers, we are as strongly compelled on the other to admire and applaud the generous, magnanimous conduct, the noble friendship, brotherly affection, and humanity of the victors, who, condescending to impute the horrid orders of massacre and devastation to their true authors, supposed that, as soldiers and Englishmen, those cruel excesses could not have originated with the general, nor were consonant to the brave and humane spirit of a British soldier, if not compelled to it as an act of duty. They traced the first cause of those diabolick orders to their true source; and, by that wise and generous interpretation, granted their professed destroyers terms of capitulation which they could be only entitled to as the makers of fair and honourable war.

My lords, I should not have presumed to trouble you, if the tremendous state of this nation did not, in my opinion, make it necessary. Such as I have this day described it to be, I do maintain it is. The same measures are still persisted in; and ministers, because your lordships have been deluded, deceived,

and misled, presume, that whenever the worst comes they will be enabled to shelter themselves behind parliament. This, my lords, cannot be the case. They have committed themselves and their measures to the fate of war, and they must abide the issue. I tremble for this country. I am almost led to despair that we shall ever be able to extricate ourselves. At any rate, the day of retribution is at hand, when the vengeance of a much injured and afflicted people, will, I trust, fall heavily on the authors of their ruin; and I am strongly inclined to believe, that before the day to which the proposed adjournment shall arrive, the noble earl who moved it, will have just cause to repent of his motion.

MR. PITT'S SPEECH,

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, JANUARY 31ST, 1799, ON OFFERING TO THE HOUSE THE RESOLUTIONS WHICH HE PROPOSED AS THE BASIS OF A UNION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

NOTWITHSTANDING what has been urged to the contrary, it will not be difficult to show that the administration of William Pitt was eminently distinguished by the maxims of an enlarged wisdom, and of the most liberal, enlightened and beneficial policy. There entered into its views nothing sordid, or low, or vulgar, or wily, or diminutive. The traits of his political conduct partook conspicuously of the expansiveness of his mind, and the generosity and elevation of his nature. The proofs of this position may be displayed in a brief summary of the leading measures of his political life.

William Pitt was the honest, and faithful, and zealous advocate of parliamentary reform so long as prudence warranted it.

He corrected the abuses, mitigated the violence, and restrained the injustice of the India government.

He constantly opposed with all his weight and authority, the slave trade.

He resisted the dangerous and unconstitutional principles which were advanced in the memorable discussion concerning the regency.

He cooperated to settle by a declaratory statute, in a way the most favourable to the rights of the subject,

and against the sentiments of the highest legal characters, the important doctrine of libel.

He established, with different countries, treaties of commercial intercourse as liberal, as they were reciprocally advantageous.

He took steps to guarantee the balance of power, and to preserve the peace of Europe, which were acknowledged to be dignified, wise, and magnanimous.

He acquiesced in several concessions to the Catholicks of Ireland, and was known to be disposed entirely to relieve them of their restrictions and disabilities.

He succeeded ultimately, by the most consummate management, in effecting a union between the sister isles, thus strengthening, by knitting together, the detached members of the empire.

While the surrounding states were torn asunder, and demolished by the hand of conquest, or the ebulition of a poisonous influence, and all Europe was menaced by calamity and ruin, he not only protected his country against this array of terrour, but pushed her on by a steady and vigorous impulse in a rapid course of unexampled prosperity and improvement.

Dark, and sinister, and inauspicious as this season was, he meliorated her finances; he extended her trade; he increased her manufactures; he promoted her agriculture; he multiplied her naval and military means; and taught her the salutary lesson, that she had wealth, and spirits, and power to combat, as long as she proved true to herself, the aggregated and envenomed hostility of the world.

Much as was accomplished by this exalted and efficient minister, it is presumable that had he been cast on times less untoward and disjointed he would have done still more for his country.

From the convictions of reason, perhaps biassed in some degree by the general habitudes of his political thinking, and the force of inherited prejudice, it is probable he would have directed his attention to prune away the defects of original construction, as

well as those corruptions which have since been introduced into the British constitution, thus rendering it as just, and perfect, in its theoretical proportions, as it is acknowledged to be excellent in its practical operations.

To us, indeed, it would not be easy to select a statesman whom history has recorded, that effected so much for his country, or who lays claim to so large a share of the admiration and gratitude of posterity.

It had been for many years a favourite object with Mr. Pitt to incorporate Ireland with Great Britain under an imperial legislature. The advantages of such a union could hardly have escaped his penetrating and sagacious mind. But it was an achievement full of hazard and difficulty. The mere suggestion of the measure, he was aware would excite violent, and perhaps at so critical a juncture, very serious consequences. He resolved, however, to attempt it, and having previously made these preparations which were required to conciliate the dispositions of the two countries to the project, he announced it to parliament, in the following message from the throne, on the 22d of January, 1799.

"His majesty is persuaded that the unremitting industry with which our enemies persevere in their avowed design of effecting the separation of Ireland from this kingdom, cannot fail to engage the particular attention of parliament. And his majesty recommends it to this house to consider of the most effectual means of counteracting and finally defeating this design. And he trusts that a review of all the circumstances which have recently occurred (joined to the sentiment of mutual affection and common interest) will dispose the parliament of both kingdoms to provide, in the manner which they shall judge most expedient, for settling such a complete and final adjustment as may best tend to improve and perpetuate a connexion essential for their common security, and to augment and consolidate the strength, power, and resources of the British empire."

Nearly about the same period, the question was rather informally brought before the Irish parliament, and after a very hasty and acrimonious debate, the ministerial party succeeded in carrying an address

approving of the Union; in the house of lords, by a decisive majority; but in the commons, by a single vote only.

On the 31st of January, of the same year, Mr. Pitt revived the subject, and submitted to the British parliament the annexed resolutions as the basis of a union between the two countries.

RESOLUTIONS.

FIRST.

That in order to promote and secure the essential interests of Great Britain and Ireland, and to consolidate the strength, power, and resources of the British empire, it will be advisable to concur in such measures as may best tend to unite the two kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, in such manner, and on such terms and conditions as may be established by acts of the respective parliaments of his majesty's said kingdoms.

SECOND.

That it appears to this committee that it would be fit to propose as the first article to serve as a basis of the said union, that the said kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland shall, upon a day to be agreed upon, be united into one kingdom, by the name of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

THIRD.

That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the succession to the monarchy and the imperial crown of the said united kingdoms, shall continue limited and settled, in the same manner as the imperial crown of the said kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland now stands limited and settled, according to the existing laws, and to the terms of the union between England and Scotland.

FOURTH.

That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the said united kingdom be represented in one and the same parliament, to be styled the parliament of the united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and that such a number of lords spiritual and temporal, and such a number of members of the house of commons as shall be hereafter agreed upon by acts of the respective parliaments as aforesaid, shall sit and vote in the said parliament on the part of Ireland, and shall be summoned, chosen and returned, in such manner as shall be fixed by an act of the parliament of Ireland previous to the said union;

and that every member hereafter to sit and vote in the said parliament of the united kingdom shall, until the said parliament shall otherwise provide, take and subscribe the same oaths, and make the same declarations as are by law required to be taken, subscribed and made by the members of the parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland.

FIFTH.

That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the churches of England and Ireland, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, shall be preserved as now by law established.

SIXTH.

That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that his majesty's subjects in Ireland shall at all times hereafter be entitled to the same privileges, and be on the same footing in respect of trade and navigation, in all ports and places belonging to Great Britain, and in all cases with respect to which treaties shall be made by his majesty, his heirs or successours, with any foreign power, as his majesty's subjects in Great Britain; that no duty shall be imposed on the import or export between Great Britain and Ireland of any articles now duty free; and that on other articles there shall be established, for a time to be limited, such a moderate rate of equal duties as shall previous to the union, be agreed upon and approved by the respective parliaments, subject, after the expiration of such limited time, to be diminished equally with respect to both kingdoms, but in no case to be increased; that all articles which may at any time hereafter be imported into Great Britain from foreign parts, shall be importable through either kingdom into the other, subject to the like duties and regulations as if the same were imported directly from foreign parts; that where any articles, the growth, produce, or manufacture of either kingdom, are subject to any internal duty in one kingdom, such countervailing duties (over and above any duties on import to be fixed as aforesaid) shall be imposed as shall be necessary to prevent any inequality in that respect: and that all other matters of trade and commerce other than the foregoing, and than such others as may before the union be specially agreed upon for the due encouragement of the agriculture and manufactures of the respective kingdoms, shall remain to be regulated from time to time by the united parliament.

SEVENTH.

That for the like purpose it would be fit to propose, that the charge arising from the payment of the interest or sinking fund for the reduction of the principal of the debt incurred in either kingdom before the union, shall continue to

be separately defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland respectively. That for a number of years to be limited, the future ordinary expenses of the united kingdom, in peace or war, shall be defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland jointly, according to such proportions as shall be established by the respective parliaments previous to the union; and that after the expiration of the time to be so limited, the proportion shall not be liable to be varied, except according to such rates and principles as shall be in like manner agreed upon previous to the union.

EIGHTH.

That for the like purpose it would be fit to propose, that all laws in force at the time of the union, and that all the courts of civil or ecclesiastical jurisdiction within the respective kingdoms, shall remain as now by law established within the same, subject only to such alterations or regulations from time to time as circumstances may appear to the parliament of the united kingdom to require.

That the foregoing resolutions be laid before his majesty with a humble address, assuring his majesty that we have proceeded with the utmost attention to the consideration of the important objects recommended to us in his majesty's gracious message.

That we entertain a firm persuasion that a complete and entire union between Great Britain and Ireland, founded on equal and liberal principles, on the similarity of laws, constitution and government, and on a sense of mutual interests and affections, by promoting the security, wealth and commerce of the respective kingdoms, and by allaying the distractions which have unhappily prevailed in Ireland, must afford fresh means of opposing at all times an effectual resistance to the destructive projects of our foreign and domestick enemies, and must tend to confirm and augment the stability, power, and resources of the empire.

Impressed with these considerations, we feel it our duty humbly to lay before his majesty such propositions as appear to us best calculated to form the basis of such a settlement, leaving it to his majesty's wisdom, at such time and in such manner as his majesty, in his parental solicitude for the happiness of his people, shall judge fit, to communicate these propositions to his parliament of Ireland, with whom we shall be at all times ready to concur in all such measures as may be found most conducive to the accomplishment of this great and salutary work. And we trust that, after full and mature consideration, such a settlement may be framed and established, by the deliberate consent of the parliaments of both kingdoms, as may be conformable to the sentiments, wishes, and real interests of his majesty's faithful subjects of Great Britain and Ireland, and may unite them inseparably in the full

enjoyment of the blessings of our free and invaluable constitution, in the support of the honour and dignity of his majesty's crown, and in the preservation and advancement of the welfare and prosperity of the whole British empire.

The above resolutions gave rise to a very protracted, and eloquent debate, which terminated in an adoption by each house of an address to the king, acquainting him with their approbation of them, and requesting his majesty to lay their proceedings before the Irish parliament. The viceroy of Ireland having, by the king's instructions, accordingly done so, the subject now underwent a more thorough investigation than formerly, and the whole of Mr. Pitt's propositions were voted by considerable majorities in both houses.

As soon as the concurrence of the Irish parliament was communicated to the British, a bill was introduced ratifying the measure, which provided "*that the union between Great Britain and Ireland should commence on the* 1*st of January*, 1801, *being the first day of the nineteenth century.*"

Mr. Pitt, in submitting his propositions to the British house of commons, spoke as follows.

SPEECH, *&c.*

SIR,

WHEN I proposed to the house, the last time this subject was before them, to fix this day for the further consideration of his majesty's message, I certainly indulged the hope that the result of a similar communication to the parliament of Ireland would have opened a more favourable prospect, than at present exists, of the speedy accomplishment of a measure which I then stated, and which I still consider, to be of the greatest importance to the power, the stability, and the general welfare of the empire; to the immediate interests of both kingdoms; and more particularly to the peace, the tranquillity, and the safety of Ireland. In this hope, I am sorry to say, I have for the present been disappointed, by the pro-

ceedings of the Irish house of commons, of which we have been informed since this subject was last under consideration.

I feel and know that the parliament of Ireland possesses the power, the entire competence, on the behalf of that country, alike to accept or reject a proposition of this nature—a power which I am by no means inclined to dispute. I see that at the present moment one house of parliament in Ireland has expressed a repugnance, even to the consideration of this measure. Feeling, sir, as I have already stated, that it is important, not only as it tends to the general prosperity of the empire of Great Britain, but (what, under every situation, must always be to me an object of the greatest moment) feeling that it was designed and calculated to increase the prosperity and ensure the safety of Ireland, I must have seen with the deepest regret that, at the very first moment, and before the nature of the measure could be known, it was so received.

But whatever may have been my feelings upon this subject, knowing that it is the undoubted right of the legislature of Ireland to reject or to adopt such measures as may appear to them injurious or beneficial, far be it from me to speak of its determination in any other terms but those of respect. Let it not, therefore, be imagined that I am inclined to press any sentiment, however calculated it may appear to me to benefit every member of the empire, in any manner which may lead to hostile discussion between two kingdoms, whose mutual happiness and safety depend upon their being strictly and cordially united. But while I admit and respect the rights of the parliament of Ireland, I feel that, as a member of the parliament of Great Britain, I also have a right to exercise, and a duty to perform. That duty is to express, as distinctly as I can, the general nature and outline of the plan, which, in my conscience, I think would tend in the strongest manner to ensure the safety and happiness of both kingdoms.

While I feel, therefore, that as long as the house of commons of Ireland view the subject in the light they do at present, there is no chance of its adoption, I do not think that I ought on that account to abstain from submitting it to the consideration of this parliament. On the contrary, I think it only the more necessary to explain distinctly the principles of the measure, and to state the grounds upon which it appears to me to be entitled to the approbation of the legislature.

If parliament, when it is in possession of the basis upon which this plan is founded, and of its general outline, should be of opinion with me, that it is founded upon fair, just, and equitable principles, calculated to produce mutual advantages to the two kingdoms—if parliament, I say, upon full explanation, and after mature deliberation, should be of that opinion, I should propose that its determination should remain recorded as that by which the parliament of Great Britain is ready to abide, leaving to the legislature of Ireland to reject or to adopt it hereafter, upon a full consideration of the subject.

There is no man who will deny that in a great question of this nature, involving in it objects which, in the first instance, are more likely to be decided upon by passion than by judgment; in a question in which an honest but, I must be allowed to say, a mistaken sense of national pride is so likely to operate, that much misconstruction and misconception must inevitably happen. It therefore becomes the more necessary that the intentions of the government which proposes the measure, and the principles of the measure itself, should be distinctly understood. But, sir, in stating that intention and those principles, I look to something more than a mere vindication of government for having proposed the measure. I do entertain a confidence, even under the apparent discouragement of the opinion expressed by the Irish house of commons, that this measure is founded upon such clear, such demonstrable grounds of utility, is so calculated to add to the strength and power

of the empire, in which the safety of Ireland is included, and from which it never can be separated, and is attended with so many advantages to Ireland in particular, that all that can be necessary for its ultimate adoption is, that it should be stated distinctly, temperately, and fully, and that it should be left to the unprejudiced, the dispassionate, the sober judgment of the parliament of Ireland. I wish that those whose interests are involved in this measure should have time for its consideration. I wish that time should be given to the landed, to the mercantile, and manufacturing interest; that they should look at it in all its bearings, and that they should coolly examine and sift the popular arguments by which it has been opposed, and that then they should give their deliberate and final judgment.

I am the more encouraged in this hope of the ultimate success of this measure, when I see, notwithstanding all the prejudices which it has excited, that barely more than one half of the members that attended the house of commons were adverse to it; and that in the other house of parliament in Ireland, containing, as it does, so large a portion of the property of that kingdom, it was approved of by a large majority. When I have reason to believe that the sentiments of a large part of the people of that country are favourable to it; and that much of the manufacturing, and of the commercial interest of Ireland are already sensible how much it is calculated to promote their advantage, I think, when it is more deliberately examined, and when it is seen in what temper it is here proposed and discussed, that it will still terminate in that which can alone be a fortunate result.

It would be vain indeed to hope that a proposition upon which prejudices are so likely to operate, and which is so liable to misconception, should be unanimously approved. But the approbation I hope for is, that of the parliament of Ireland, and of the intelligent part of the publick of that country. It is with a view to this object that I think it my duty to bring

this measure forward at present; not for the sake of urging its immediate adoption, but that it may be known and recorded; that the intention of the British parliament may be known, in the hope that it will produce similar sentiments among our countrymen in Ireland. With this view it is my intention not to go at present into any detailed statement of the plan, because should it ultimately be adopted, the minuter parts must necessarily become the objects of much distinct discussion; but to give such a general statement of the nature of the measure as will enable the house to form a correct judgment upon it.

I shall therefore, sir, before I sit down, open to the house a string of resolutions, comprising the general heads of this plan. It will be necessary for me, for the purpose of discussing those resolutions with regularity and convenience, to move that the house should resolve itself into a committee. And I have already stated, that it is not my intention then to press the committee to come to an immediate decision upon the resolutions; but if, upon full and deliberate examination, the resolutions which I shall have the honour to propose, and which contain as much as is necessary for an outline of the plan, shall be approved, my opinion is, that nothing can contribute more to obviate any doubts and dissatisfaction which may exist, than that parliament should adopt those resolutions, and that it should then humbly lay them at the foot of the throne, leaving it to his majesty's wisdom to communicate them to the parliament of Ireland, whenever circumstances should appear favourable to such a measure. I shall therefore, sir, proceed as shortly as I can to state to the house the nature of the resolutions, and of the address which I shall propose to accompany them, if it should be the pleasure of the house to adopt them.

Having now, sir, explained to the house the mode I mean to pursue, and my reasons for persisting, under the present circumstances, in submitting this measure to the consideration of parliament, I will endeavour to state the general grounds on which it

rests, the general arguments by which it is recommended, and to give a short view of the outline of the plan.

As to the general principle upon which the whole of this measure is founded, I am happy to observe, from what passed upon a former occasion, that there is not a probability of any difference of opinion. The general principle, to which both sides of the house perfectly acceded, is that a perpetual connexion between Great Britain and Ireland is essential to the interests of both. The only honourable gentleman who, when this subject was before the house on a former day, opposed the consideration of the plan altogether, stated, in terms as strong as I could wish, the necessity of preserving the strictest connexion between the two countries. I most cordially agree with him in that opinion, but I then stated that I do not barely wish for the maintenance of that connexion as tending to add to the general strength of the empire, but I wish for the maintenance of it with a peculiar regard to the local interests of Ireland, with a regard to every thing that can give to Ireland its due weight and importance, as a great member of the empire. I wish for it with a view of giving to that country the means of improving all its great natural resources, and of giving it a full participation of all those blessings which this country so eminently enjoys.

Considering the subject in this point of view, and assuming it as a proposition not to be controverted, that it is the duty of those who wish to promote the interest and prosperity of both countries, to maintain the strongest connexion between them, let me ask, what is the situation of affairs that has called us to the discussion of this subject? This very connexion, the necessity of which has been admitted on all hands has been attacked by foreign enemies, and by domestick traitors. The dissolution of this connexion is the great object of the hostility of the common enemies of both countries, it is almost the only remaining hope with which they now continue the con-

test. Baffled and defeated as they have hitherto been, they still retain the hope, they are still meditating attempts, to dissolve that connexion. In how many instances already the defeat of their hostile designs has been turned to the confirmation of our strength and security, I need not enumerate. God grant that in this instance the same favour of Divine Providence, which has in so many instances protected this empire, may again interpose in our favour, and that the attempts of the enemy to separate the two countries, may tend ultimately to knit them more closely together, to strengthen a connexion, the best pledge for the happiness of both, and so add to that power which forms the chief barrier to the civilized world, against the destructive principles, the dangerous projects, and the unexampled usurpation of France. This connexion has been attacked not only by the avowed enemies of both countries, but by internal treason, acting in concert with the designs of the enemy. Internal treason, which ingrafted jacobinism on those diseases which necessarily grew out of the state and condition of Ireland.

Thinking, then, as we all must think, that a close connexion with Ireland is essential to the interests of both countries, and seeing how much this connexion is attacked, let it not be insinuated that it is unnecessary, much less improper, at this arduous and important crisis, to see whether some new arrangements, some fundamental regulations, are not necessary, to guard against the threatened danger. The foreign and domestick enemies of these kingdoms have shown, that they think this the vulnerable point in which we may be most successfully attacked. Let us derive advantage if we can, from the hostility of our enemies—let us profit by the designs of those who, if their conduct displays no true wisdom, at least possess in an eminent degree that species of wisdom which is calculated for the promotion of mischief. They know upon what footing that connexion rests at this moment between the two countries, and they feel the most ardent hope, that the two parliaments will be infatuated

enough not to render their designs abortive, by fixing that connexion upon a more solid basis.

These circumstances I am sure will not be denied. And if upon other grounds we had any doubt, these circumstances alone ought to induce us, deliberately and dispassionately, to review the situation of the two countries, and to endeavour to find out a proper remedy for an evil, the existence of which is but too apparent. It requires but a moment's reflection, for any man who has marked the progress of events, to decide upon the true state and character of this connexion. It is evidently one which does not afford that security which, even in times less dangerous and less critical than the present, would have been necessary, to enable the empire to avail itself of its strength and its resources.

When I last addressed the house on this subject, I stated that the settlement, which was made in 1782, so far from deserving the name of a final adjustment, was one that left the connexion between Great Britain and Ireland exposed to all the attacks of party and all the effects of accident. That settlement consisted in the demolition of the system which before held the two countries together. Let me not be understood as expressing any regret at the termination of that system. I disapproved of it, because I thought it was one unworthy the liberality of Great Britain, and injurious to the interests of Ireland. But to call that a system in itself, to call that a glorious fabrick of human wisdom, which is no more than the mere demolition of another system, is a perversion of terms which, however prevalent of late, can only be the effect of gross misconception, or of great hypocrisy. We boast that we have done every thing, when we have merely destroyed all that before existed, without substituting any thing in its place. Such was the *final adjustment* of 1782; and I can prove it to be so, not only from the plainest reasoning, but I can prove it by the opinion expressed by the British parliament at that very time. I can prove it by the opinion expressed by those very ministers by whom it was proposed and conducted. I

refer, for what I have said, to proofs which they will find it very difficult to answer: I mean their own acts, which will plainly show that they were of opinion that a new system would be necessary. But, sir, I will go further. I will also produce the authority of one of those whose influence, on the present occasion, has been peculiarly exerted to prevent the discussion of the question in Ireland—of one, of whom I do not wish to speak but with respect, but for whom, nevertheless, I should convey an idea of more respect, than I can now feel to be due to him, if I were merely to describe him as the person who fills the same situation, in the house of commons of Ireland, which you, sir, hold among us, and of which on all occasions *you* discharge the duties with a dignity and impartiality which reflects so much credit on yourself, and so well supports the character and authority of the house.

On a former night, I read an extract from the journals, to show what was the opinion even of those by whom the final adjustment was proposed on that measure. It would there appear, that the message was sent to the parliament of Ireland, recommending to them the adoption of some plan for a final adjustment between the two countries, and wishing to know what were the grounds of the grievances of which they complained. In answer to this message, the parliament of Ireland stated certain grievances, the principal of which was, the power claimed by the parliament of Great Britain of making laws to bind Ireland; but, with respect to that part of the message which related to the propriety of adopting some measures for a final adjustment between the two countries, they were wholly silent. This address was laid before the parliament of Great Britain, to whom a similar message had been previously sent, and on that ground was moved the repeal of what was called the Declaratory Act, which motion was assented to by the British parliament. This satisfaction was complete to Ireland, as far as related to the grievance of which her parliament had complained, viz. the power

of the British parliament of making laws for Ireland, because, by the repeal of the Declaratory Act, that power was given up. But so far was the minister of that day from considering that the repeal of that law finally terminated all differences, and established the connexion between the two countries upon a solid basis, that he thought it necessary to move that a further settlement was indispensable for the maintenance of that connexion.*

Sir, I have stated the substance of the journals correctly. They were read on a former night, and the honourable gentleman may, if he chooses, have them read again. If he does, he will find that they fully justify the statement I have made: but I beg that at present I may not be interrupted. I do maintain, that upon a reference to the journals of the period to which I have alluded, it will appear that a further agreement between Great Britain and Ireland is there stated, in the opinion of the administration of the day, to be absolutely necessary.

I beg further to state, that after the motion for the bill of which so much has been said, was passed, an address to his majesty was moved and carried, praying him to take such further measures as to him seemed proper, to strengthen the connexion between the two countries. His majesty's most gracious answer, stating, that in compliance with the address, he would immediately take such measures as might be necessary for that purpose, was delivered to the house by an honourable gentleman who then filled the office of secretary of state, and whom we have not lately seen in the house, though he still continues to be a member of it. I do assert, without the least fear of contradiction from any gentleman whatever, that it was in the contemplation of the government of that day, to adopt some measures of the nature alluded to in the address. Since that period, however, no such measure has been taken. I do also main-

* Mr. Sheridan across the table, desired that that part of the Journals to which Mr. Pitt alluded, might be read,

tain, that that very system which by these very ministers who brought it forward was found to be imperfect, even for the purpose of maintaining the connexion between the two countries, remains at this moment in the same imperfect state. It leaves the two countries with separate and independent legislatures, connected only with this tie, that the third estate in both countries is the same. That the executive government is the same. That the crown exercises its power of assenting to Irish acts of parliament under the great seal of Great Britain, and by the advice of British ministers.

This is the only principle of connexion which is left by the final adjustment of 1782. Whether this is a sufficient tie to unite them in time of peace; whether in time of war it is sufficient to consolidate their strength against a common enemy; whether it is sufficient to guard against those local jealousies which must necessarily sometimes exist between countries so connected; whether it is calculated to give to Ireland all the important commercial and political advantages which she would derive from a closer connexion with Great Britain; whether it can give to both nations that degree of strength and prosperity which must be the result of such a measure as the present, I believe needs only to be stated to be decided.

But I have already said, that I have upon this point, the authority of an opinion to which I before alluded —an opinion delivered upon a very important measure, very soon after the final adjustment of 1782. The measure to which I refer, was that of the commercial propositions which were brought forward in 1785. I am not now going to enter into a discussion of the merits of that measure. The best, perhaps, that can be said of it is, that it went as far as circumstances would then permit, to draw the two countries to a closer connexion. But those who think that the adjustment of 1782 was final, and that it contained all that was necessary for the establishment of the connexion between the two countries upon a firm ba-

sis, can hardly contend that the commercial propositions of 1785 were necessary to prevent the danger of separation between the two countries, and to prevent the conflicting operation of independent legislatures. Yet, if I am not mistaken, there will be found, upon a reference to better records than those in which parliamentary debates are usually stated (I mean a statement of what passed in the discussion upon those propositions fourteen years ago, made, as I have understood, by some of the principal parties themselves) that the chancellor of the exchequer of that day in Ireland, in a debate upon the Irish propositions, held this language: "If this infatuated country gives up the present offer, she may look for it again in vain." Here the right honourable gentleman was happily mistaken. Ireland has again had the offer of the same advantages, but more complete, and in all respects better calculated to attain their object; and this offer the right honourable gentleman has exerted all his influence to reject. But he goes on to say—"Things cannot remain as they are—commercial jealousy is roused—it will increase with *two independent legislatures*—and without a united interest in commerce, in a commercial empire, political union will receive many shocks, and *separation of interest* must threaten *separation of connexion*, which every honest Irishman must shudder to look at, as a possible event."

Gentlemen will have the goodness to observe, that I am not now quoting these expressions as pledges given by that right honourable gentleman that he would support a proposal for a union between the two countries; but I am adducing them to prove that the situation of the two countries after the final adjustment of 1782, was such, in his opinion, as led to the danger of a separation between them. I am not now arguing that a legislative union is the only measure which can possibly be adopted, but I am contending that the adjustment of 1782 was never considered as final, by those who now state it to be so as an argument against the consideration of the pre-

sent measure. How the honourable gentleman on the other side of the house will evade this authority I do not know; an authority, too, which, I must observe, he seems much more inclined to treat with respect than he was formerly.

But, sir, it does not stop there. What is the evil to which he alludes? Commercial jealousies between two countries acting upon the laws of two independent legislatures, and the danger of those legislatures acting in opposition to each other. How can this evil be remedied? By two means only; either by some compact entered into by the legislatures of the two countries respecting the mode of forming their commercial regulations, or else by blending the two legislatures together; these are the only two means. I defy the wit of man to point out a third. The mode of compact was proposed in 1785, but unfortunately, in spite of that right honourable gentman's eloquence and authority, who then stated the importance of guarding against the evil, it so happened that doctrines, derived chiefly from this side of the water, succeeded in convincing the parliament of Ireland, that it would be inconsistent with their independence, to enter into any compact whatever. We have then the authority of that right honourable gentleman to whom I have so often alluded, that the unsettled state in which the matter was left, would give "political union many shocks, and lead to a separation of connexion." The experiment of a mutual compact has been tried without success. The arrangement of that sort, which was proposed in 1785, in order to obviate the inconveniences stated by the right honourable gentleman, was then attacked with the same success against his authority, as another and more effectual remedy has recently experienced under his auspices. The result then is—you must remain in the state which that right honourable gentleman has described, with the seeds of separation in the system now established, and with the connexion, on which the mutual prosperity of both countries depends in danger of being hourly dissolved, or you

must again recur to the proposal of a compact similar to that rejected in 1785, or you must resort to the best and most effectual remedy—a legislative union.

I have dwelt longer, perhaps, upon this part of the subject than was absolutely necessary, because I believe there is scarcely any man who has ever asked himself, whether there is a solid, permanent system of connexion between the two countries, who could, upon reflection, answer the question in the affirmative. But besides the authorities of the persons who made the arrangement in 1782, and of those who have since treated of it, to show that it was not deemed to be final and complete, I have further the test of experience to show how imperfect it was, and how inadequate in practice to the great object of cementing the connexion, and placing it beyond the danger of being dissolved. In the single instance, which has occurred (and that a melancholy one which all of us deplored) in which we could feel the effects of two jarring legislatures, we did feel it. On that occasion, it might have produced the most signal calamities, had we not been rescued from its danger by an event, to which no man can look back without feeling the utmost joy and exultation; feelings, which subsequent circumstances have served to heighten and confirm. Every gentleman will know, that I must allude to the regency. With two independent legislatures, acting upon different principles, it was accident alone that preserved the identity of the executive power, which is the bond and security of the connexion; and even then the executive authority, though vested in one person, would have been held by two different tenures, by one tenure in England, by another in Ireland, had not the interposition of Providence prevented a circumstance pregnant with the most imminent perils, and which might have operated to a separation of the two kingdoms.

After seeing the recorded opinion of parliament, of those who made the arrangement of 1782, and after the decided testimony of experience on the subject, within the short period of sixteen years,

perhaps, it is hardly necessary to appeal to further proofs of its inadequacy, or to desire gentlemen to look forward to possible cases, which I could easily put, and which will naturally suggest themselves to the minds of all, who choose to turn their attention to the subject.

But when we consider the distinct powers possessed by the two legislatures on all the great questions of peace and war, of alliances and confederacies (for they each have in principle, a right to discuss them and decide upon them, though one of them has hitherto been wisely restrained by discretion, from exercise of that right) have we not seen circumstances to induce us to think it possible, at least, that on some of these important questions the opinions and decisions of the two parliaments might have been at variance? Are we talking of an indissoluble connexion, when we see it thus perpetually liable to be endangered? Can we really think that the interests of the empire, or of its different branches rest upon a safe and solid basis at present? I am anxious to discuss this point closely with any man, either here, or in Ireland. Will it be said, that the parliament of the latter country is bound by our decision on the question of peace or war? And if not so bound, will any man, looking at human nature as it is, contend, that there is a sufficient certainty that the decision on that important subject will always be the same in both countries? I should be glad to receive a distinct answer to this question, from the honourable gentleman who has declared himself to be as warm a friend to the conhexion between the two countries as I am.

Suppose, for instance, that the present war, which the parliament of Great Britain considers to be just and necessary, had been voted by the Irish parliament, to be unjust, unnecessary, extravagant, and hostile to the principles of humanity and freedom. Would that parliament have been bound by this country? If not; what security have we, at a moment the most important to our common interest and common sal-

vation, that the two kingdoms should have but one friend and one foe? I repeat it; I am eager to hear what can be said in justification of a basis so imperfect and unsound, and liable to be shaken by so many accidents. I have already observed, that in the peculiar circumstances of the present moment, we may find stronger reasons to prove the necessity of correcting the system of connexion between this country and Ireland, of supplying its imperfections, and strengthening its weakness, than are to be found at any former period.

Having thus stated, sir, and I think sufficiently proved, that the settlement of 1782, in every point of view in which it can be considered, is imperfect, and inadequate to the object of maintaining the connexion between the two kingdoms, I proceed next to the circumstances which peculiarly call upon us at the present moment to remedy that imperfection.

This country is at this time engaged in the most important and momentous conflict, that ever occurred in the history of the world; a conflict in which Great Britain is distinguished for having made the only manly and successful stand against the common enemies of civilized society. We see the point in which that enemy think us the most assailable. Are we not then bound in policy and prudence, to strengthen that vulnerable point, involved as we are in a contest of liberty against despotism; of prosperity against plunder and rapine; of religion and order against impiety and anarchy? There was a time when this would have been termed declamation; but, unfortunately, long and bitter experience has taught us to feel that it is only the feeble and imperfect representation of those calamities (the result of French principles and French arms) which are every day attested by the wounds of a bleeding world.

Is there a man who does not admit the importance of a measure which, at such a crisis, may augment the strength of the empire, and thereby ensure its safety? Would not that benefit to Ireland be of itself

so solid, so inestimable, that, in comparison with it, all commercial interests, and the preservation of local habits and manners, would be trifling, even if they were endangered by the present measure, which they undoubtedly are not? The people of Ireland are proud, I believe, of being associated with us in the great contest in which we are engaged, and must feel the advantage of augmenting the general force of the empire. That the present measure is calculated to produce that effect, is a proposition which I think cannot be disputed. There is not in any court of Europe a statesman so ill informed as not to know, that the general power of the empire would be increased to a very great extent indeed, by such a consolidation of the strength of the two kingdoms. In the course of the century every writer of any information on the subject has held the same language, and in the general strength of the empire both kingdoms are more concerned than in any particular interests which may belong to either. If we were to ask the ministers of our allies, what measure they thought the most likely to augment the power of the British empire, and consequently increase that strength by which they were now protected; if we were to ask the agents of our enemies, what measure would be the most likely to render their designs abortive, the answer would be the same in both cases, namely, the firm consolidation of every part of the empire.

There is another consideration well worth attention. Recollect what are the peculiar means by which we have been enabled to resist the unequalled and eccentrick efforts of France, without any diminution, nay, with an increase, of our general prosperity; what, but the great commercial resources which we possess? A measure, then, which must communicate to such a mighty limb of the empire as Ireland, all the commercial advantages which Great Britain possesses, which will open the markets of the one country to the other; which will give them both the common use of their capital, must, by diffusing

a large portion of wealth into Ireland, considerably increase the resources, and consequently the strength, of the whole empire.

But it is not merely in this general view, that I think the question ought to be considered. We ought to look to it with a view peculiarly to the permanent interest and security of Ireland. When that country was threatened with the double danger of hostile attacks by enemies without, and of treason within, from what quarter did she derive the means of her deliverance? from the naval force of Great Britain, from the voluntary exertions of her military of every description, not called for by law, and from her pecuniary resources, added to the loyalty and energy of the inhabitants of Ireland itself, of which it is impossible to speak with too much praise, and which shows how well they deserve to be called the brethren of Britons. Their own courage might, perhaps, have ultimately succeeded, in repelling the dangers by which they were threatened, but it would have been after a long contest, and after having waded through seas of blood. Are we sure that the same ready and effectual assistance which we have happily afforded, on the present occasion, will be always equally within our power? Great Britain has always felt a common interest in the safety of Ireland; but that common interest was never so obvious and urgent as when the common enemy made her attack upon Great Britain, through the medium of Ireland, and when their attack upon Ireland went to deprive her of her connexion with Great Britain, and to substitute instead, the new government of the French Republick. When that danger threatened Ireland, the purse of Great Britain was open for the wants of Ireland, as for the necessities of England.

I do not, sir, state these circumstances, as upbraiding Ireland for the benefits we have conferred; far from it; but I state them with pleasure, as showing the friendship and good will with which this country has acted towards her. But if struggles of this sort may and must return again, if the worst dangers are

those which are yet to come, dangers which may be greater from being more disguised—if those situations may arise when the same means of relief are not in our power, what is the remedy that reason and policy point out? It is to identify them with us—it is to make them part of the same community, by giving them a full share of those accumulated blessings which are diffused throughout Great Britain; it is, in a word by giving them a full participation of the wealth, the power, and the stability, of the British empire. If then this measure comes recommended not only by the obvious defects of the system which now exists, but that it has also the pre-eminent recommendation of increasing the general power of the empire, and of guarding against future danger from the common enemy, we are next to consider it as to its effects upon the internal condition of Ireland.

I know perfectly well, that as long as Ireland is separated from Great Britain, any attempt on our part to provide measures which we might think salutary, as respecting questions of contending sects or parties, of the claimed rights of the catholicks, or of the precautions necessary for the security of the protestants, I know that all these, though they may have been brought forward by the very persons who are the advocates of the final adjustment in 1782, were, in fact, attacks upon the independence of the Irish parliament, and attempts to usurp the right of deciding on points which can only be brought within our province by compact. Until the kingdoms are united any attempt to make regulations here for the internal state of Ireland must certainly be a violation of her independence. But feeling as I do, for their interests and their welfare, I cannot be inattentive to the events that are passing before me; I must therefore repeat, that whoever looks at the circumstances to which I have alluded—whoever considers that the enemy have shown by their conduct, that they considered Ireland as the weakest and most vulnerable part of the empire; whoever reflects upon those dreadful and inexcusable cruelties instigated by the enemies of both countries,

and upon those lamentable severities by which the exertions for the defence of Ireland were unhappily, but unavoidably, attended, and the necessity of which is itself one great aggravation of the crimes and treasons which led to them, must feel that, as it now stands composed, in the hostile division of its sects, in the animosities existing between ancient settlers and original inhabitants, in the ignorance and want of civilisation, which marks that country more than almost any other country in Europe, in the unfortunate prevalence of jacobin principles, arising from these causes, and augmenting their malignity, and which have produced that distressed state which we now deplore; every one, I say, who reflects upon all these circumstances, must agree with me in thinking, that there is no cure but in the formation of a general imperial legislature, free alike from terrour and from resentment, removed from the danger and agitation, uninfluenced by the prejudices and uninflamed by the passions of that distracted country.

I know that it is impossible, if we wish to consider this subject properly, to consider it in any other point of view than as it affects the empire in general. I know that the interests of the two countries must be taken together, and that a man cannot speak as a true Englishman, unless he speaks as a true Irishman, nor as a true Irishman, unless he speaks as a true Englishman. But if it was possible to separate them, and I could consider myself as addressing you, not as interested for the empire at large, but for Ireland alone, I should say, that it would be indispensably necessary, for the sake of that country, to compose its present distractions, by the adoption of another system: I should say, that the establishment of an imperial legislature was the only means of healing its wounds and of restoring it to tranquillity. I must here take the liberty of alluding to some topicks which were touched upon during the discussion of the former night.

Among the great and known defects of Ireland, one of the most prominent features is, its want of

industry and a capital; how are those wants to be supplied, but by blending more closely with Ireland, the industry and the capital of this country. But, above all, in the great leading religious distinctions, what is their situation? The protestant feels that the claims of the catholicks threaten the existence of the protestant ascendency; while, on the other hand, the great body of catholicks feel the establishment of the national church, and their exclusion from the exercise of certain rights, and privileges, a grievance. Between the two, it becomes a matter of difficulty in the minds of many persons, whether it would be better to listen only to the fears of the former, or to grant the claims of the latter.

I am well aware that the subject of religious distinction is a dangerous and delicate topick, especially when applied to a country such as Ireland, the situation of which is different in this respect from that of every other. Where the established religion of the state is the same as the general religion of the empire, and where the property of the country is in the hands of a comparatively small number of persons professing that established religion, while the religion of a great majority of the people is different, it is not easy to say, on general principles, what system of church establishment in such a country would be free from difficulty and inconvenience. By many I know it will be contended, that the religion professed by a majority of the people, would at least be entitled to an equality of privileges. I have heard such an argument urged in this house; but those who apply it without qualification to the case of Ireland, forget surely the principles on which English interest and English connexion has been established in that country, and on which its present legislature is formed. No man can say, that, in the present state of things, and while Ireland remains a separate kingdom, full concessions could be made to the catholicks, without endangering the state, and shaking the constitution of Ireland to its centre.

On the other hand, without anticipating the discussion, or the propriety of agitating the question, or saying how soon or how late it may be fit to discuss it, two propositions are indisputable: First, when the conduct of the catholicks shall be such as to make it safe for the government to admit them to the participation of the privileges granted to those of the established religion and when the temper of the times shall be favourable to such a measure; when these events take place, it is obvious that such a question may be agitated in a united, imperial parliament, with much greater safety, than it could be in a separate legislature. In the second place, I think it certain that, even for whatever period it may be thought necessary, after the union, to withhold from the catholicks the enjoyment of those advantages, many of the objections which at present arise out of their situation would be removed, if the protestant legislature were no longer separate and local, but general and imperial; and the catholicks themselves would at once feel a mitigation of the most goading and irritating of their present causes of complaint.

How far, in addition to this great and leading consideration, it may also be wise and practicable to accompany the measure by some mode of relieving the lower orders from the pressure of tithes, which, in many instances, operate at present as a great practical evil, or to make, under proper regulations, and without breaking in on the security of the present protestant establishment, an effectual and adequate provision for the catholick clergy, it is not now necessary to discuss. It is sufficient to say, that these, and all other subordinate points connected with the same subject, are more likely to be permanently and satisfactorily settled by a united legislature, than by any local arrangements. On these grounds I contend, that with a view to providing an effectual remedy for the distractions which have unhappily prevailed in Ireland, with a view of removing those causes which have endangered, and still endanger its security, the measure which I am now proposing promises to be

more effectual than any other which can be devised, and on these grounds alone, if there existed no other, I should feel it my duty to submit it to the house.

But, sir, though what I have thus stated relates most immediately to the great object of healing the dissensions, and providing for the internal tranquillity of Ireland; there are also other objects which, though comparatively with this of inferiour importance, are yet in themselves highly material, and in a secondary view, well worthy of attention.

I have heard it asked, when I pressed the measure, what are the positive advantages that Ireland is to derive from it? To this very question I presume the considerations which I have already urged afford a sufficient answer. But, in fact the question itself is to be considered in another view; and it will be found to bear some resemblance to a question which has been repeatedly put, by some of the gentlemen opposite to me, during the last six years. What are the advantages which Great Britain has gained by the present war with France?

To this, the brilliant successes of the British arms by sea and land, our unexampled naval victories over all our enemies, the solid acquisition of valuable territory, the general increase of our power, the progressive extension of our commerce, and a series of events more glorious than any that ever adorned the page of our history, afford at once an ample and a satisfactory answer. But there is another general answer which we have uniformly given, and which would alone be sufficient: it is, that we did not enter into this war for any purpose of ambition; our object was not to acquire, but to preserve; and in this sense, what we have gained by the war is, in one word, all that we should have lost without it: it is, the preservation of our constitution, our independence, our honour, our existence as a nation.

In the same manner I might answer the question with respect to Ireland. I might enumerate the general advantages which Ireland would derive from the effects of the arrangement to which I have already

referred: the protection which she will secure to herself in the hour of danger. The most effectual means of increasing her commerce and improving her agriculture, the command of English capital, the infusion of English manners and English industry, necessarily tending to ameliorate her condition, to accelerate the progress of internal civilisation, and to terminate those feuds and dissensions which now distract the country, and which she does not possess within herself, the power either to control or to extinguish. She would see the avenue to honours, to distinctions, and exalted situations in the general seat of empire, opened to all those whose abilities and talents enable them to indulge an honourable and laudable ambition.

But, independent of all these advantages, I might also answer, that the question is not what Ireland is to gain, but what she is to preserve; not merely how she may best improve her situation, but how she is to avert a pressing and immediate danger. In this view, what she gains is the preservation of all those blessings arising from the British constitution, and which are inseparable from her connexion with Great Britain. Those blessings of which it has long been the aim of France, in conjunction with domestick traitors, to deprive her, and on their ruins to establish, with all its attendant miseries and horrours, a jacobin republick, founded on French influence, and existing only in subserviency to France.

Such, sir, would be the answer, if we direct our attention only to the question of general advantage; and here I should be inclined to stop: but since it has also been more particularly asked, what are the advantages which she is to gain, in point of commerce and manufactures, I am desirous of applying my answer immediately and distinctly to that part of the subject: and as I know that the statement will carry more conviction with it, to those who make the inquiry, if given in the words of the right honourable Gentleman, to whom, and to whose opinions I have had more than one occasion to advert in the

course of this night, I will read you an extract from his recorded sentiments on the subject, in the year 1785, on this same memorable occasion of the commercial propositions. Speaking of a solid and unalterable compact between the two countries, speaking expressly of the peculiar importance of ensuring the continuance of those commercial benefits, which she at that time held only at the discretion of this country, he says—"The exportation of Irish products, to England, amounts to two millions and a half annually; and the exportation of British products, to Ireland, amounts to but one million."

He then proceeds to reason upon the advantage which Ireland would derive, under such circumstances from guarding against mutual prohibitions; and he accompanies the statement, which I have just read, with this observation:

"If, indeed, the adjustment were to take away the benefit from Ireland, it would be a good cause for rejecting it; but, as it for ever confirms all the advantages we derived from our linen trade, and binds England from making any law that can be injurious to it, surely gentlemen who regard that trade, and *whose fortunes and rents depend on its prosperity, will not entertain a moment's doubt about embracing the offer.*"

Such was the reasoning of the Irish chancellor of the exchequer; which I consider to have been perfectly just. With reference to his late opinions, I do not think I can more forcibly reply, to a person who signs his name to propositions which declare that the ruin of the linen trade of Ireland is likely to be the consequence of a union, than by opposing to him his own opinion. I shall be able to strengthen the former opinion of that gentleman, by stating, that the progress that has been made in commercial advantages to Ireland, since 1785, has been such as to render his argument still more applicable. What is the nature of that commerce, explained by the same person in so concise and forcible a manner, that I am happy to use his own statement? He does not con-

fine himself to the gross amount, but gives the articles in detail:

"Britain," he says, "imports annually from us two million five hundred thousand pounds of our products, all, or very nearly all, duty free, and covenants never to lay a duty on them. We import about a million of hers, and raise a revenue on almost every article of it, and reserve the power of continuing that revenue. She exports to us salt for our fisheries and provisions; hops, which we cannot grow; coals, which we cannot raise; tin, which we have not; and bark, which we cannot get elsewhere: and all these without reserving any duty."

I will not tire the patience of the house, by reading further extracts; but the right honourable gentleman's whole speech, in like manner, points out the advantages of the commercial propositions (at that time under consideration) as a groundwork of a compact between the two countries, in 1785, on commercial subjects.—But how stands the case now? The trade is at this time infinitely more advantageous to Ireland. It will be proved, from the documents which I hold in my hand, as far as relates to the mere interchange of manufactures, that the manufactures exported to Ireland from Great Britain, in 1797, very little exceeded a million sterling (the articles of produce amount to nearly the same sum) while Great Britain, on the other hand, imported from Ireland to the amount of near three millions in the manufactured articles of linen and linen yarn, and between two and three millions in provisions and cattle, besides corn and other articles of produce.

In addition to these articles, there are other circumstances of advantage to Ireland. Articles which are essential to her trade and to her subsistence, or serve as raw materials for her manufactures, are sent from hence free of duty. It is expressly stated on the same authority, that all that we take back from Ireland was liable to a duty in that country on their exports. The increasing produce of the chief article of their manufacture, and four fifths of her whole

export trade, are to be ascribed, not to that independent legislature, but, to the liberality of the British parliament. It is by the free admission of linens for our market, and the bounties granted by the British parliament on its re-export, that the linen trade has been brought to the height at which we now see it. To the parliament of this country, then, it is now owing, that a market has been opened for her linen to the amount of three millions. By the bounty we give to Ireland, we afford her a double market for that article, and, what is still more striking and important, we have prevented a competition against her, arising from the superiour cheapness of the linen manufactures of the continent, by subjecting their importation to a duty of thirty per cent. Nothing would more clearly show what would be the danger to Ireland from the competition in all its principal branches of the linen trade, than the simple fact, that we even now import foreign linens, under this heavy duty, to an amount equal to a seventh part of all that Ireland is able to send us, with the preference that has been stated. By this arrangement alone, we must therefore be considered, either as foregoing between seven and eight hundred thousand pounds per annum in revenue, which we should collect if we chose to levy the same duty on all linens, Irish as well as foreign, or on the other hand, as sacrificing perhaps at least a million sterling in the price paid for those articles, by the subjects of this country, which might be saved, if we allowed the importation of all linen, foreign as well as Irish, equally free from duty.

The present measure is, however, in its effects calculated not merely for a confirmation of the advantages on which the person to whom I have alluded has insisted. It is obvious that a fuller and more perfect connexion of the two countries, from whatever cause it may arise, must produce a greater facility and freedom of commercial intercourse, and ultimately tend to the advantage of both. The benefits to be derived to either country from such an arrangement must indeed, in a great measure, be gradual;

but they are not on that account the less certain, and they cannot be stated in more forcible language than in that used in the speech to which I have referred.

"Gentlemen undervalue the reduction of British duties on our manufactures. I agree with them it may not operate soon, but we are to look forward to a final settlement, and it is impossible but that in time, with as good climate, equal natural powers, cheaper food, and fewer taxes, we must be able to sell to them. When a commercial jealousy shall be banished by final settlement, and trade take its natural and steady course, the kingdoms will cease to look to rivalship; each will make that fabrick which it can do cheapest, and buy from the other what it cannot make so advantageously. Labour will be then truly employed to profit, not diverted by bounties, jealousies, or legislative interference, from its natural and beneficial course. This system will attain its real object, consolidating the strength of the remaining parts of the empire, by encouraging the communications of their market among themselves, with preference to every part against all strangers!"

I am at least, therefore, secure from the design of appearing to deliver any partial or chimerical opinion of my own, when I thus state, on the authority of a person the best informed, and who then judged dispassionately, both the infinite importance to Ireland of securing permanently the great commercial advantages which she now holds at the discretion of Great Britain, and the additional benefit which she would derive from any settlement which opened to her gradually a still more free and complete commercial intercourse with this country. And while I state thus strongly the commercial advantages to the sister kingdom, I have no alarm lest I should excite any sentiment of jealousy here. I know that the inhabitants of Great Britain wish well to the prosperity of Ireland. That, if the kingdoms are really and solidly united, they feel that to increase the commercial wealth of one country is not to diminish that of the

other, but to increase the strength and power of both. But to justify that sentiment, we must be satisfied that the wealth we are pouring into the lap of Ireland is not every day liable to be snatched from us, and thrown into the scale of the enemy. If, therefore, Ireland is to continue, as I trust it will for ever, an essential part of the integral strength of the British empire; if her strength is to be permanently ours, and our strength to be hers, neither I, nor any English minister, can ever be deterred by the fear of creating jealousy in the hearts of Englishmen, from stating the advantages of a closer connexion, or from giving any assistance to the commercial prosperity of that kingdom.

If ever indeed I should have the misfortune to witness the melancholy moment when such principles must be abandoned, when all hope of seeing Ireland permanently and securely connected with this country shall be at an end, I shall at least have the consolation of knowing, that it will not be the want of temper or forbearance, of conciliation, of kindness, or of full explanation on our part, which will have produced an event so fatal to Ireland, and so dangerous to Great Britain. If ever the overbearing power of prejudice and passion shall produce that fatal consequence, it will too late be perceived and acknowledged, that all the great commercial advantages which Ireland at present enjoys, and which are continually increasing, are to be ascribed to the liberal conduct, the fostering care, of the British empire, extended to the sister kingdom as to a part of ourselves, and not, as has been fallaciously and vainly pretended, to any thing which has been done or can be done by the independent power of her own separate legislature.

I have thus, sir, endeavoured to state to you the reasons, why I think this measure advisable; why I wish it to be proposed to the parliament of Ireland, with temper and fairness; and why it appears to me, entitled at least to a calm and dispassionate discussion in that kingdom. I am aware, however, that objec-

tions have been urged against the measure, some of which are undoubtedly plausible, and have been but too successful in their influence on the Irish parliament. Of these objections I shall now proceed, as concisely as possible, to take some notice.

The first is, what I heard alluded to by the honourable gentleman opposite to me, when his majesty's message was brought down; namely, that the parliament of Ireland is incompetent to entertain and discuss the question, or rather, to act upon the measure proposed, without having previously obtained the consent of the people of Ireland, their constituents. But, sir, I am led to suppose from what the honourable gentleman afterwards stated, that he made this objection, rather by way of deprecating the discussion of the question, than as entertaining the smallest doubt upon it himself. If, however, the honourable gentleman, or any other gentleman on the other side of the house, should seriously entertain a doubt on the subject, I shall be ready to discuss it with him distinctly, either this night or at any future opportunity. For the present I will assume, that no man can deny the competency of the parliament of Ireland (representing as it does, in the language of our constitution, "*lawfully, fully, and freely, all the estates of the people of the realm*") to make laws to bind that people, unless he is disposed to distinguish that parliament from the parliament of Great Britain; and, while he maintains the independence of the Irish legislature, yet denies to it the lawful and essential powers of parliament. No man, who maintains the parliament of Ireland to be coequal with our own, can deny its competency on this question, unless he means to go the length of denying, at the same moment, the whole of the authority of the parliament of Great Britain; to shake every principle of legislation, and to maintain, that all the acts passed, and every thing done by parliament, or sanctioned by its authority, however sacred, however beneficial, is neither more nor less than an act of usurpation. He must not only deny the validity of the union between Scot-

land and England, but he must deny the authority of every one of the proceedings of the united legislature since the union; nay, sir, he must go still further, and deny the authority under which we now sit and deliberate here, as a house of parliament. Of course, he must deny the validity of the adjustment of 1782, and call in question every measure which he has himself been the most forward to have enforced. This point, sir, is of so much importance, that I think I ought not to suffer the opportunity to pass, without illustrating more fully what I mean. If this principle of the incompetency of parliament to the decision of the measure be admitted, or if it be contended, that parliament has no legitimate authority to discuss and decide upon it, you will be driven to the necessity of recognising a principle the most dangerous that ever was adopted in any civilized state. I mean the principle, that parliament cannot adopt any measure new in its nature, and of great importance, without appealing to the constituent and delegating authority for directions. If that doctrine be true, look to what an extent it will carry you. If such an argument could be set up and maintained, you acted without any legitimate authority when you created the representation of the principality of Wales, or of either of the counties palatine of England. Every law that parliament ever made, without that appeal, either as to its own frame and constitution, as to the qualification of the electors or the elected, as to the great and fundamental point of the succession to the crown, was a breach of treaty, and an act of usurpation.

If we turn to Ireland itself, what do gentlemen think of the power of that parliament, which, without any fresh delegation from its protestant constituents, associates to itself all the catholick electors, and thus destroys a fundamental distinction on which it was formed? God forbid, that I should object to or blame any of these measures! I am only stating the extent to which the principle (that parliament has no authority to decide upon the present measure) will lead; and, if it be admitted in one case, it must

be admitted in all. Will any man say, that (although a protestant parliament in Ireland, chosen exclusively by protestant constituents, has by its own inherent power, and without consulting those constituents, admitted and comprehended the catholicks who were till then, in fact, a separate community) that parliament cannot associate itself with another protestant community, represented by a protestant parliament, having one interest with itself, and similar in its laws, its constitution, and its established religion? What must be said by those who have at any time been friends to any plan of parliamentary reform, and particularly to such as have been most recently brought forward, either in Great Britain or Ireland? Whatever may have been thought of the propriety of the measure, I never heard any doubt of the competency of parliament to consider and discuss it. Yet I defy any man to maintain the principle of those plans, without contending that, as a member of parliament, he possesses a right to concur in disfranchising those who sent him to parliament, and to select others, by whom he was not elected, in their stead. I am sure that no sufficient distinction, in point of principle, can be successfully maintained for a single moment; nor should I deem it necessary to dwell on this point, in the manner I do, were I not convinced that it is connected in part with all those false and dangerous notions on the subject of government which have lately become too prevalent in the world. It may, in fact, be traced to that gross perversion of the principles of all political society, which rests on the supposition that there exists continually in every government a sovereignty in abeyance (as it were) on the part of the people, ready to be called forth on every occasion, or rather, on every pretence, when it may suit the purposes of the party or faction who are the advocates of this doctrine to suppose an occasion for its exertion. It is in these false principles that are contained the seeds of all the misery, desolation, and ruin, which in the present day have spread themselves over so large a portion of the habitable globe.

These principles, sir, are, at length, so well known and understood in their practical effects, that they can no longer hope for one enlightened or intelligent advocate, when they appear in their true colours. Yet, with all the horrour we all feel, in common with the rest of the world, at the effect of them, with all the confirmed and increasing love and veneration which we feel towards the constitution of our country, founded as it is, both in theory and experience, on principles directly the reverse; yet, there are too many among us, who, while they abhor and reject such opinions, when presented to them in their naked deformity, suffer them in a more disguised shape to be gradually infused into their minds, and insensibly to influence and bias their sentiments and arguments on the greatest and most important discussions. This concealed poison is now more to be dreaded than any open attempt to support such principles by argument or to enforce them by arms. No society, whatever be its particular form, can long subsist, if this principle is once admitted. In every government there must reside somewhere a supreme, absolute, and unlimited authority. This is equally true of every lawful monarchy—of every aristocracy—of every pure democracy (if indeed such a form of government ever has existed, or ever can exist) and of those mixed constitutions formed and compounded from the others, which we are justly inclined to prefer to any of them. In all these governments, indeed alike, that power may by possibility be abused; but whether the abuse is such as to justify and call for the interference of the people collectively, or, more properly speaking, of any portion of it, must always be an extreme case and a question of the greatest and most perilous responsibility, not in law only, but in conscience and in duty, to all those who either act upon it themselves, or persuade others to do so. But no provision for such a case ever has been or can be made beforehand. It forms no chapter in any known code of laws, it can find no place in any system of human jurisprudence. But, above all, if such a principle

can make no part of any established constitution, not even of those where the government is so framed as to be most liable to the abuse of its powers, it will be preposterous indeed to suppose that it can be admitted in one where those powers are so distributed and balanced as to furnish the best security against the probability of such an abuse. Shall that principle be sanctioned as a necessary part of the best government, which cannot be admitted to exist as an established check even upon the worst! Pregnant as it is with danger and confusion, shall it be received and authorized in proportion as every reason which can ever make it necessary to recur to it is not likely to exist? Yet, sir, I know not how it is, that, in proportion as we are less likely to have occasion for so desperate a remedy, in proportion as a government is so framed as to provide within itself the best guard and control on the exercise of every branch of authority, to furnish the means of preventing or correcting every abuse of power, and to secure, by its own natural operation, a due attention to the interest and feelings of every part of the community, in that very proportion persons have been found perverse enough to imagine, that such a constitution admits and recognizes, as a part of it, that which is inconsistent with the nature of any government, and, above all, inapplicable to our own.

I have said more, sir, upon this subject than I should have thought necessary, if I had not felt that this false and dangerous mockery of the sovereignty of the people is in truth one of the chief elements of jacobinism, one of the favourite impostures to mislead the understanding, and to flatter and inflame the passions of the mass of mankind, who have not the opportunity of examining and exposing it, and that as such on every occasion, and in every shape in which it appears, it ought to be combated and resisted by every friend to civil order, and to the peace and happiness of mankind.

Sir, the next and not the least prevalent objection, is one which is contained in words which are an appeal

to a natural and laudable, but what I must call an erroneous and mistaken, sense of national pride. It is an appeal to the generous and noble passions of a nation easily inflamed under any supposed attack upon its honour. I mean the attempt to represent the question of a union by compact between the parliaments of the two kingdoms as a question involving the independence of Ireland.—It has been said, that no compensation could be made to any country for the surrender of its national independence. Sir, on this, as well as on every part of the question, I am desirous gentlemen should come closely to the point, that they should sift it to the bottom, and ascertain upon what grounds and principles their opinion really rests. Do they mean to maintain that in any humiliating, in any degrading sense of the word which can be acted upon practically as a rule, and which can lead to any useful conclusion, that at any time when the government of any two separate countries unite in forming one more extensive empire, that the individuals who composed either of the former narrow societies are afterwards less members of an independent country, or to any valuable and useful purpose less possessed of political freedom or civil happiness than they were before? It must be obvious to every gentleman who will look at the subject, in tracing the history of all the countries, the most proud of their present existing independence, of all the nations in Europe, there is not one that could exist in the state in which it now stands, if that principle had been acted upon by our forefathers; and Europe must have remained to this hour in a state of ignorance and barbarism, from the perpetual warfare of independent and petty states. In the instance of our own country it would be a superfluous waste of time to enumerate the steps by which all its parts were formed into one kingdom; but will any man in general assert, that in all the different unions which have formed the principal states of Europe, their inhabitants have become less free, that they have less of which to be proud, less scope for their own exertions, than they had in

their former situation? If this doctrine is to be generally maintained, what becomes of the situation at this hour of any one county of England, or of any one county of Ireland, now united under the independent parliament of that kingdom? If it be pushed to its full extent, it is obviously incompatible with all civil society. As the former principle of the sovereignty of the people strikes at the foundation of all governments, so this is equally hostile to all political confederacy, and mankind must be driven back to what is called the state of nature.

But while I combat this general and abstract principle, which would operate as an objection to every union between separate states, on the ground of the sacrifice of independence, do I mean to contend that there is in no case just ground for such a sentiment? Far from it. It may become, on many occasions, the first duty of a free and generous people. If there exists a country which contains within itself the means of military protection, the naval force necessary for its defence, which furnishes objects of industry sufficient for the subsistence of its inhabitants, and pecuniary resources adequate to maintaining, with dignity, the rank which it has attained among the nations of the world; if, above all, it enjoys the blessings of internal content and tranquillity, and possesses a distinct constitution of its own, the defects of which, if any, it is within itself capable of correcting, and if that constitution be equal, if not superiour, to that of any other in the world, or (which is nearly the same thing) if those who live under it believe it to be so, and fondly cherish that opinion, I can indeed well understand that such a country must be jealous of any measure, which, even by its own consent, under the authority of its own lawful government, is to associate it as a part of a larger and more extensive empire.

But sir, if, on the other hand, it should happen that there be a country which, against the greatest of all dangers that threaten its peace and security, has not adequate means of protecting itself without the

aid of another nation; if that other be a neighbouring and kindred nation, speaking the same language, whose laws, whose customs, and habits are the same in principle, but carried to a greater degree of perfection, with a more extensive commerce, and more abundant means of acquiring and diffusing national wealth; the stability of whose government, the excellence of whose constitution, is more than ever the admiration and envy of Europe, and of which the very country of which we are speaking can only boast an inadequate and imperfect resemblance; under such circumstances, I would ask, what conduct would be prescribed by every rational principle of dignity, of honour, or of interest? I would ask, whether this is not a faithful description of the circumstances which ought to dispose Ireland to a union? Whether Great Britain is not precisely the nation with which, on these principles, a country, situated as Ireland is, would desire to unite? Does a union, under such circumstances, by free consent, and on just and equal terms, deserve to be branded as a proposal for subjecting Ireland to a foreign yoke? Is it not rather the free and voluntary association of two great countries, which join, for their common benefit, in one empire, where each will retain its proportional weight and importance, under the security of equal laws, reciprocal affection, and inseparable interests, and which want nothing but that indissoluble connexion to render both invincible.

> Non ego nec Teucris Italos parere jubebo
> Nec nova regna peto; paribus se legibus ambæ
> Invictæ gentes æterna in fœdera mittant.

Sir, I have nearly stated all that is necessary for me to trouble the house with. There are, however, one or two other objections which I wish not entirely to pass over: one of them is, a general notion that a union with Great Britain must necessarily increase one of the great evils of Ireland, by producing depopulation in many parts of the country, and by increasing greatly the number of absentees. I do not

mean to deny that this effect would, to a limited extent, take place during a part of the year; but I think it will not be difficult for me to prove, that this circumstance will be more than counterbalanced by the operation of the system in other respects.

If it be true that this measure has an inevitable tendency to admit the introduction of that British capital which is most likely to give life to all the operations of commerce, and to all the improvements of agriculture; if it be that which above all other considerations is most likely to give security, quiet, and internal repose to Ireland; if it is likely to remove the chief bar to the internal advancement of wealth and of civilisation, by a more intimate intercourse with England; if it is more likely to communicate from hence those habits which distinguish this country, and which, by a continued gradation, unite the highest and the lowest orders of the community without a chasm in any part of the system; if it is not only likely to invite, as I have already said, English capital to set commerce in motion, but to offer it the use of new markets, to open fresh resources of wealth and industry; can wealth, can industry, can civilisation increase among the whole bulk of the people without much more than counterbalancing the partial effect of the removal of the few individuals who, for a small part of the year, would follow the seat of legislation? If, notwithstanding the absence of parliament from Dublin, it would still remain the centre of education and of the internal commerce of a country increasing in improvement; if it would still remain the seat of legal discussion, which must always increase with an increase of property and occupation, will it be supposed, with a view even to the interests of those whose partial interests have been most successfully appealed to; with a view either to the respectable body of the bar, to the merchant, or shopkeeper of Dublin (if it were possible to suppose that a transaction of this sort ought to be referred to that single criterion) that they would not find their

proportionate share of advantage in the general advantage of the state? Let it be remembered, also, that if the transfer of the seat of legislature may call from Ireland to England the members of the united parliament, yet, after the union, property, influence and consideration in Ireland will lead, as much as in Great Britain, to all the objects of imperial ambition; and there must, consequently, exist a new incitement to persons to acquire property in that country, and to those who possess it, to reside there and to cultivate the good opinion of those with whom they live, and to extend and improve their influence and connexions.

But, sir, I need not dwell longer on argument, however it may satisfy my own mind, because we can on this question refer to experience. I see every gentleman anticipates that I allude to Scotland. What has been the result of the union there? A union, give me leave to say, as much opposed, and by much the same arguments, prejudices, and misconceptions, as are urged, at this moment, creating, too, the same alarms, and provoking the same outrages, as have lately taken place in Dublin. Look at the metropolis of Scotland. The population of Edinburgh has been more than doubled since the union, and a new city added to the old. But we may be told, that Edinburgh has engrossed all the commerce of that country, and has those advantages which Dublin cannot expect. Yet while Edinburgh, deprived of its parliament, but retaining, as Dublin would retain, its courts of justice; continuing, as Dublin would continue, the resort of those whose circumstances would not permit them to visit a distant metropolis; continuing, as Dublin would continue, the seat of national education, while Edinburgh has baffled all the predictions of that period, what has been the situation of Glasgow? The population of Glasgow, since the union, has increased in the proportion of between five and six to one. Look at its progress in manufactures; look at its general advantages, and tell me what ground there is, judging by experience

in aid of theory, for those gloomy apprehensions which have been so industriously excited.

There remains, sir, another general line of argument, which I have already anticipated, and I hope answered, that the commercial privileges now enjoyed by Ireland, and to which it owes so much of its prosperity, would be less secure than at present. I have given an answer to that already, by stating that they are falsely imputed to the independence of the Irish parliament, for that they are in fact owing to the exercise of the voluntary discretion of the British parliament, unbound by compact, prompted only by its natural disposition to consider the interests of Ireland the same as its own; and if that has been done while Ireland is only united to us in the imperfect and precarious manner in which it is, while it has a separate parliament, notwithstanding the commercial jealousies of our own manufactures; if, under these circumstances we have done so, if we have done so with no other connexion than that which now subsists, and while Ireland has no share in our representation; what fresh ground can there be for apprehension, when she will have her proportionate weight in the legislature, and will be united with us as closely as Lancashire or Yorkshire, or any other county in Great Britain.

Sir, I have seen it under the same authority to which I am sorry so often to advert, that the linen trade would be injured, and that there will be no security for its retaining its present advantages. I have already stated to you, and with that very authority in my favour, that those advantages are at present precarious, and that their security can only arise from compact with Great Britain. Such a compact, this measure would establish in the most solemn manner; but besides this, sir, the natural policy of this country, not merely its experienced liberality, but the identity of interests after a union, would offer a security worth a thousand compacts.

Sir, the only other general topick of objection is that upon which great pains have been taken to raise

an alarm in Ireland; the idea that the main principle of the measure was to subject Ireland to a load of debt and an increase of taxes, and to expose her to the consequences of all our alleged difficulties and supposed necessities.

Sir, I hope the zeal, the spirit, and the liberal and enlarged policy of this country, have given ample proof that it is not from a pecuniary motive that we seek a union. If it is not desirable on the grounds I have stated, it cannot be recommended for the mere purpose of taxation; but to quiet any jealousy on this subject, here again let us look to Scotland. Is there any instance where, with 45 members on her part and 513 on ours, that part of the united kingdom has paid more than its proportion to the general burthens? Is it, then, sir, any ground of apprehension, that we are likely to tax Ireland more heavily when she becomes associated with ourselves? To tax in its due proportion the whole of the empire, to the utter exclusion of the idea of the predominance of one part of society over another, is the great characteristick of British finance, as equality of laws is of the British constitution.

But, sir, in addition to this, if we come to the details of this proposition, it is in our power to fix, for any number of years which shall be thought fit, the proportion by which the contribution of Ireland to the expenses of the state shall be regulated; that these proportions shall not be such as would make a contribution greater than the necessary amount of its own present necessary expenses as a separate kingdom; and, even after that limited period, the proportion of the whole contribution, from time to time, might be made to depend on the comparative produce, in each kingdom, of such general taxes as might be thought to afford the best criterion of their respective wealth. Or, what I should hope would be found practicable, the system of internal taxation in each country might gradually be so equalized and assimilated, on the leading articles, as to make all

rules of specifick proportion unnecessary, and to secure, that Ireland shall never be taxed but in proportion as we tax ourselves.

The application of these principles, however, will form matter of future discussion. I mention them only as strongly showing, from the misrepresentation which has taken place on this part of the subject, how incumbent it is upon the house to receive these propositions, and to adopt, after due deliberation, such resolutions as may record to Ireland the terms upon which we are ready to meet her. And, in the mean time, let us wait, not without impatience, but without dissatisfaction, for that moment, when the effect of reason and discussion may reconcile the minds of men, in the kingdom, to a measure which I am sure will be found as necessary for their peace and happiness, as it will be conducive to the general security and advantage of the British empire.

Sir, it remains for me only to lay these resolutions before the house, wishing that the more detailed discussion of them may be reserved to a future day.

THE SPEECH

OF THE HON. RICHARD B. SHERIDAN,

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, JANUARY, 1802, ON THE DEFINITIVE TREATY OF AMIENS.

WHEN the treaty of Amiens came under the consideration of the British parliament, there appeared relative to that measure, three distinct political parties. By the ministry who concluded the peace it was, of course, approved and vindicated. By a section of their predecessors in office, who had originated and conducted the war it was most strenuously resisted, and violently condemned as a disgraceful and ruinous compromise of the dignity, the honour, and safety of the country.

By the *old opposition*, consisting of Mr. Fox and his friends, the peace was defended, not on account of the merits of the treaty, but as required by the crippled and exhausted condition to which the nation was reduced by the disasters of the war.

Among those that contemplated the measure in this last point of view was Mr. Sheridan, whose speech on the occasion, is here introduced.

However we may dissent from the principles and reasoning contained in this speech, we cannot help admiring the sparkling wit, and good humoured raillery which render it so gay, so brilliant and so amusing.

SPEECH, &c.

SIR,

AT this late hour* it is with extreme reluctance I rise to address the house, and to trespass upon your time and patience. I shall not be singular to night in professions I make you of avoiding details; but, sir, in one respect my conduct will be different from that of any other gentleman who has addressed you. I will keep my word. If I feel repugnance to rise at so late an hour, I feel equally strange with respect to the unpopularity which I fear I must experience. It is natural to every person to have pleasure in voting in a majority, though to that pleasure I believe I have been long a stranger. Among the strange things we are continually witnessing, is the strange division of parties at present in this house. Sir, I have heard it said, that there are about twelve or thirteen different parties among us; nay, some carry the number much further. Now I scarcely expect a single vote with me beyond that little circle of a constitutional party who have for the last ten years been the objects of so much unqualified abuse; but those men who have so often been held up to publick opprobrium, are the very same men whose every prediction has been fulfilled, and every fear realized. The discussion of this necessary, but disgraceful treaty of peace, to night, is a confirmation of the propriety of their political conduct during the whole course of the war. My friends must feel poignant shame and deep humiliation at the situation to which by these terms this country is reduced, but which they have laboured steadily to avert. Those who oppose this peace have been arraigned by the last speaker, as aiming at a censure on the issue of the negotiations, and on the ministers themselves. And certainly, sir, their object is to condemn the peace, and to cast a slur on the abilities of his majesty's ministers. But, in this conduct of theirs, they have at least the merit of being

* Two o'clock in the morning.

consistent. I support the peace, because I feel confident no better terms, considering all circumstances, could be got. Their predecessors had taken care of that. They had left them no choice, but between an expensive, bloody, and fruitless war, and a perilous and hollow peace.

They have chosen the best of the alternatives. Now, says the minister, they who oppose me, depress the country. I thank these new oppositionists for their manly firmness in coming forward and opposing, upon their own principles, this degrading treaty. Let the people of this country be fully aware of all the circumstances of the peace. They have done their duty, then, in thus publickly discussing them. But a right honourable gentleman, not here this evening, an ex-minister too, suspects something more. If he has not altered his opinion since the preceding day, he suspects their motives. They, says he, disapprove the treaty, and attack administration, because they wish to drive out ministers, and succeed to their places; and for that purpose they have formed a confederacy. Truly, sir, a heavy charge. But, I must declare, that they never veiled their opinions. Some of them, especially, have been at all times very open, and I conceive that it would be high injustice to suspect them upon slight grounds of a dirty cabal to turn out the present ministers. Says the right honourable gentleman, upon their principles they would never have made peace. Why so we have always said. It is now therefore confirmed, that a leading part of the late ministry acted upon such principles. But the right honourable gentleman,* the preceding day denounced their foul ambition, and their design to trip up the heels of their successours! Another great discovery is made. These persons' principles were such as rendered a peace impossible, and yet the very men who say so, have just been thanking them all, as the saviours of the country! Can the right honourable gentleman account for this inconsistency? I should

* Mr. Dundas.

think not; and yet he looks so confidently, I almost think he could. He thought I was jeering him, as if I did not suppose him a constant supporter of the war; and he assures the house "he was a steady friend to it." But he has now found out that it was necessary to stop. Pray why not have stopped a little sooner? Why not before we were so much exhausted? For instance, when Buonaparte made you an offer. Now, however, he finds the necessity of peace. But is this such a peace as will give us real repose? Consider your debt and taxes, and the necessity which seems to be at length coming upon us of keeping up a peace establishment, unknown in this country. It is lamentable to see you all split into miserable parties, when your great enemy is uniting every possible means of extending his power. You are squabbling about the measuring of ribbons and tapes, and the paltry revenues of Malta, when much greater objects are before you. The events of every day seem to call more and more for the expression of that publick feeling, that the time will come when French encroachments and oppression will cease, and when the voice of this country must be clearly raised against their atrocious and tyrannical conduct. The right honourable gentleman says "we have preserved our honour." Honour depends more on the manner of doing a thing, than on the thing itself. We had a great armament at the time of negotiation, but I don't hear that it carried any point whatever. This, says he, is a piece in which we relinquish nothing, but gain much. Will any man of common sense undertake to prove that? I defy him to name the single object, ever varying, ever shifting, unrelinquished. What did we go to war for? Why, to prevent French aggrandizement. Have we done that? No. Then we are to rescue Holland. Is that accomplished or relinquished? No. Brabant was a *sine qua non*—Is it gained? No. Then some security and indemnity! Are they obtained? The late minister told us, that the example of a jacobin government in Europe, founded on the ruins of the

holy altar, and the tomb of a martyred monarch, was a spectacle so dreadful and infectious to Christendom, that we could never be safe while it existed, and could do nothing short of our very last effort for its destruction. Now, sir, let us see what we have got. But what have we laid out for all these fine words, which at last gave way to security and indemnity? Why near two hundred thousand lives, and three hundred millions of money—and we have gotten Ceylon and Trinidad. I should propose, that, as we have given to our heroes titles from the places where their laurels were won, our St. Vincents, Nelsons of the Nile, &c. so we should name Ceylon *Security Island*, and Trinidad the *Isle of Indemnity*. Now, if we look at the states of Europe, we find the noble lord opposite has a most curious and convenient epithet, which he applies to what is rather a disagreeable object to him*. He talks of being in an uncomfortable —was it?—Oh no—*unsatisfactory state*. Germany, Holland, Italy, they are all in an unsatisfactory state; and so I suppose is Switzerland, which now seems likely to undergo a division among her powerful and generous neighbours. That innocent and virtuous, suffering, venerable country is now, I suppose, in an unsatisfactory state! But Great Britain is all this time far from languor. She is in a satisfactory state! However, a grave and learned gentleman† tells us, for our comfort, that notwithstanding all that has happened, here we are debating and doing business in all the old forms and customs of the house. Pray now, could not this have happened, supposing we had never gone to war? I think he should have made that out before he congratulated us so warmly upon our present debate under all the old forms of the house. The minister, too, goes on according to old forms. He has his majorities, according to custom. Prussia can go on, too, in its old forms. Is this

* Lord Hawksbury.

† Master of the Rolls.

armed repose, this hollow peace, then, the fruit of our long and glorious war? A great deal too has been said to be gained by the disposition of France to lay aside jacobinism. But the grand consolation of all is, in looking to Buonaparte as the extirpator of jacobinism. The learned gentleman, however, states to this house, that it is the nature of jacobinism, if driven from any country, always to look with pride and ambition to a settlement in the place where it had birth, and to fix itself there. So now, this "child and champion of jacobinism," as he was styled, is to become a parricide. The child of sin is to destroy his mother. As this jacobinism is by the late minister stated to be a vice never to be eradicated from the bosom where it has once been implanted, all Europe will, doubtless, look to this great consul for its destruction. Indeed, he seems very desirous of extending his care to his neighbours. Suppose you make him king of Europe at once, and he will soon extirpate all the jacobinism that infests it. My alarms begin when the alarms of some persons cease. The great question about the dangers of the French revolution was always upon the degree of the danger to be apprehended. Some danger was always allowed: but to suppose the people of this country so miserably infatuated as to fall in love with dirt and blood, and guillotines, with all the atrocious deformities of the system of Robespierre, and that now when France is "covered with glory," though certainly without liberty, or any thing that much resembles it, there should be nothing to dazzle and captivate, is out of my comprehension. If there be in this country men of dangerous ambition, Buonaparte is the man to hold out to them, by his ambitious and successful conduct, an example. An example, how much stronger than any thing that could attract the people in the exhibitions of riot and murder, unsociality and ferocity of manners! But they say, he has begged pardon of God and man by his piety and penitence! No. He has restored bishops with the salaries of curates, and made them all spies and informers in his favour

by a solemn oath. He has made his own use of them all. How has he acted in Switzerland? How to us? Why, by condescending to receive our humiliating submission of every thing you had acquired by the prowess of your army and navy. I must trust to our valour to defend us against his armies; and I pray heaven to protect us against the effects of his penitence and piety! I must confess that nothing has been stated against this peace unaccompanied by proofs. I had rather have given Malta to France, and taken the Cape; than have made this absurd arrangement. If the late secretary for the war department were here, who is, perhaps,* by proxy, he might have made a whimsical charge against the present minister. He † said, that "the minister who should give up the Cape, would deserve to lose his head!" There sits the minister, however, with his head safe upon his shoulders. I have almost a mind to attack him on the authority of Mr. Dundas. Malta would be a great acquisition to us, and therein I agree with the war-secretary. It would have stood, with the British standard flying in the centre of the Mediterranean, "like a great sea-mark, saving those that eye it!" Ministers say, the emperour of Russia would not take care of Malta. If they will tell me so upon their honour, I wont believe any body that says so. That did not appear to be Paul's idea of it. Perhaps he was mad. There was, however, some method in his madness; but, sir, there is a message Buonaparte has sent to his tribunate concerning some Russian soldiers, who are to go and take care of the republick of the Seven Islands, and they may probably be intended for Alexandria, and may be connected with some plan against Turkey. Sir, if any thing in the shape of a statesman will say in this house, that he looks at that power, "at which the world turns pale," without apprehension, as the minister seems to tell us to night, I must say he has a prodigious stock of courage, or no skill at all in politicks. But let France

* Looking at Mr. Pitt. † Mr. Dundas.

have colonies—Oh, yes, let her have a good trade, that she may be afraid of war, says the learned member; that's the way to make him love peace. He has had, to be sure, a sort of military education. He has been abroad, and in rather rough company; but if you put him behind the counter a little he will mend exceedingly. When I was reading the treaty, I thought of all the names of foreign places, viz. Pondicherry, Chandenagore, Cochin, Martinico, &c.—all cessions?—Not they; they are all so many traps and holes to catch this silly fellow in, and make a merchant of him! I really think the best way, upon this principle, would be this: let the merchants of London open a publick subscription, and set him up at once! I hear a great deal respecting a certain statue about to be erected to the right honourable gentleman* now in my eye, at a great expense. Send all that money over to the first consul, and give him what you talk of so much, capital, to begin trade with. I hope the right honourable gentleman over the way will, like the first consul, refuse a statue for the present, and postpone it as a work to posterity. There is no harm, however, in marking out the place. The right honourable gentleman is musing, perhaps, on what square or place he will choose for its erection. I recommend the bank of England. Now for the material. Not gold, no, no! he has not left enough of it. I should however propose *papier maché*, and old bank notes. Ministers recommend us to make France commercial, for the sake of peaceful habits; and then tell us how impossible it is for her to increase in trade and commerce, for want of the necessary credit and capital. There my prospect was damped. I was going now to India, but I remember I promised to avoid detail. I must keep my word. There was some northern logick here last night—something specious—a kind of northern lights—pretty enough to look at, but not very useful,—about our possessions having better security in India without, than with our enemy's recognition

* Mr. Pitt.

of our rights. This, I confess, I cannot understand. The right honourable gentleman asks, whether they would have been justified in breaking off the treaty? That is a question between him and those who like the preliminaries; but it is otherwise with those who like neither. The Secretary at war * has said, Buonaparte will look at us "with a soldier's eye." I think he will with that of a statesman. Now the city militia, and some other corps, are disbanded, it is not exactly a spectacle for a soldier's eye. One cannot walk along the streets without hearing doubts expressed of the nature and security of the peace. And the next great question is, "pray, who is minister now?" Is there, then, an interiour and exterior prime minister? one who appears to the world, and another secret, irresponsible, directing minister? Certainly, in several respects I have given my testimony in behalf of the present ministers: In nothing more than for making the best peace, perhaps, they could, after their predecessors had left them in such a deplorable situation. But the present ministers continue to identify themselves with the former. They have ministerially supported a refusal to inquire into the state of the country. Just as they were about to take the government, they have passed an indemnity bill, and since that, a security bill in a resolution of thanks; and these are the only indemnity and security required! The ex-ministers are quite separate and distinct, and yet they and the new ministers are all honourable friends! What is the meaning of this mysterious connexion? Why does not the minister defend his peace on the only grounds of defence? Does he hold that situation only to make peace, and leave it for his predecessor? Do they bargain for support, on one side of talent, and on the other of power? No minister of this country ever condescended to act under such equivocal support. Part of the case is clear. If the late minister attacks the treaty, the present would turn round and say: "You brought me into

* Mr. Yorke.

a situation of necessity; you compelled me to sign a disgraceful treaty; you had been arrogant, and I have put up with indignity. Buonaparte, by his minister, Otto, would laugh at me! This work is yours. You placed us in this dilemma." The minister takes no strong ground of defence. I won't say he dares not take it. There he sits to receive the attack of the new confederacy, who are not great in numbers, but in talents. The ex-minister is mounted on a kind of hill fort, to fire down on the assailants; but the garrison is all manned with deserters from the principles of the war. I should like to support the present minister on fair ground; but what is he? A sort of outside passenger, or rather a man leading the horses round a corner, while reins, whip, and all, are in the hands of the coachman on the box.* Why not have a union of the two ministers, or, at least, some intelligible connexion? When the ex-minister quitted office, almost all the subordinate ministers kept their places. How was it that the whole family did not move together? Had he only one covered wagon to carry away friends and goods? Or has he left directions behind him, that they may know where to call? I remember a fable of Aristophanes; it is translated from Greek into decent English. I mention this for the country gentlemen. It is of a man that sat so long on a seat, about as long, perhaps, as the ex-minister did on the treasury bench, that he grew to it. When Hercules pulled him off, he left all the sitting part of the man behind him. The house can make the allusion. This is not a noble, manly kind of coalition between these gentlemen. Of that ex-minister I would just say, that no man admires his splendid talents more than I do. If ever there was a man formed and fitted by nature to benefit his country, and to give it lustre, he is such a man. He has no low, little, mean, petty vices. He has too much good sense, taste, and

* Looks at Mr. Pitt's elevated seat, three or four benches above that of the treasury.

talent, to set his mind upon ribands, stars, titles, and other appendages and idols of rank. He is of a nature not at all suited to be the creature or tool of any court. * But while I thus say of him no more than I think his character and great talents deserve, I must tell him how grossly he has misapplied them in the politicks of this country. I must tell him again how he has augmented our national debt, and of the lives he lost in this war. I must tell him he has done more against the privileges of the people, increased more the power of the crown, and injured more the constitution of his country, than any minister I can mention. Of the resignation of the late ministry, I don't believe one word of what is said about Catholick emancipation. I could as soon believe it was because they had dicovered the longitude. If they did go out on that ground, they were certainly at liberty so to do. But after they had quitted their situations they circulated a paper in Ireland, attributing the failure of an indispensible measure to resistance in a certain quarter, and that quarter was their sovereign; and directing the Irish Catholicks to look to them for hope of relief. If this was short of high treason, how far short of it I cannot define. If, however, that measure was necessary to carrying on hostilities, we have certainly done right so far in making this peace.

I will now, sir, submit an amendment to the proposed address, which, whether adopted, or not, will at least record the real grounds on which I, and those with whom I have the honour to act, approve of a peace, the terms of which are so inadequate and so insecure.

"It is the opinion of this house, that the omission of various opportunities of negotiating a peace with advantage to this country, and more especially the rejection of the overtures made by the chief consul of France, in January 1801, appears to this house

* Mr. Pitt bowed repeatedly.

to have led to a state of affairs, which rendered peace so necessary as to justify the important and painful sacrifices which his majesty has been advised to make for the attainment thereof."

THE SPEECH

OF THE RIGHT HON. HENRY GRATTAN,

ON THE PROPOSITIONS REGULATING THE COMMERCIAL INTERCOURSE BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, DELIVERED IN THE IRISH HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON THE 15TH OF AUGUST, 1785.

ENTERTAINING a very correct estimate of the mutual importance of Great Britain and Ireland to each other, Mr. Pitt seems to have neglected no occasion of drawing the two countries into a close and harmonious connexion. Changing, therefore, the restrictive, and illiberal policy which too long had been pursued towards the sister isle, he very early in his administration directed his mind to concerting a system of commercial intercourse, which, while it removed every injurious rivalry, and just complaint of partiality, should equally promote the interests of each of these sections of the empire.

After diligently examining the subject, in which he was assisted by commissioners appointed on the part of Ireland, he succeeded in sketching a plan, which was submitted to the Irish parliament on the 11th of February 1785. The concurrence of that legislature being obtained to the proposed scheme, Mr. Pitt moved, without delay, in the English house of commons, the subsequent resolution.

"*That it is higly important to the general interests of the empire, that the commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland should be finally adjusted,*

and that Ireland should be permitted to have a permanent and irrevocable participation of the commercial advantages of this country, when her parliament should permanently and irrevocably secure an aid out of the surplus of the hereditary revenue of that kingdom, towards defraying the expense of protecting the general commerce of the empire, in time of peace.

Conformably to the spirit of the preceding resolution, he digested a plan, and laid it before parliament, by which

1. *Britain was to allow the importation of the produce of the colonies in the West Indies, and of America, into Ireland, and*

2. *There was to be established between the two countries a mutual exchange of their respective productions, and manufactures on equal terms.*

This outline of his system he followed up, in the course of the same sesssion, by a series of propositions, the result of more careful and elaborate inquiries, which exhibited a full and explicit development of the conditions on which he contemplated the commercial intercourse of the two countries was to be finally settled, and permanently secured.

These propositions after undergoing a severe discussion in the English parliament, and encountering scarcely less opposition from the jealousies, and prejudices of the traders and manufacturers of Britain, were, nevertheless, carried in both houses. They were then transmitted for the approbation of the Irish legislature. But there, as well as throughout the country, they met with a resistance as violent, as it was unexpected. By the discussion which the subject had received in England, the people of Ireland were, previously to its coming under the consideration of their parliament excited to a very determined hostility to the measure. Their passions were, if possible, yet further aroused by the inflammatory harangues delivered against the propositions in the legislature.

Condemning the whole system, these popular leaders pointed their invectives particularly to the fourth,

and ninth propositions by which the legislative independence of Ireland was alleged to be infringed, and her trade to India was actually restrained.

The propositions were, however, ultimately voted by a very inconsiderable majority. But with such slender support, the minister deemed it inexpedient to enforce his system while the publick mind continued so much exasperated against it.

Thus did Ireland lose by the clamours of her populace, stirred up by her factious declaimers, a code of commercial, and, in some degree, federative regulation, which being constructed on principles of perfect reciprocity* would certainly if adopted, have rapidly increased her prosperity, and probably averted too, those calamities which have since arisen out of her troubled and unsettled state.

Of those who were signalized by their opposition to this system, Mr. Grattan was the most conspicuous. His speech in the memorable debate on the subject, has been, perhaps, as much extolled as any specimen of Irish eloquence. But we insert it here, we confess, rather in compliance with the publick sentiment so strongly declared in its favour, than from any conviction of our own, of its extraordinary merit.

SPEECH, &c.

SIR,

I CAN excuse the right honourable member who moves you for leave to bring in the bill.† He is an Englishman, and contends for the power of his own country, while I am contending for the liberty of mine. He might have spared himself the trouble of stating his own bill. I read it before. I read it

* The only exception, was the prohibition of Ireland to trade to India. But here they were only prevented from infringing the *chartered rights* of the India Company, and in this respect, were placed precisely on the same footing with every *British subject who was not a member of that corporation.*

† Mr. Orde.

in the twenty resolutions. I read it in the English bill, which is to all intents and purposes the same; and which he might read without the trouble of resorting to his own. His comment is of little moment. A lord lieutenant's secretary is an unsafe commentator on an Irish constitution. The former merit of the right honourable gentleman in pressing for the original propositions and contending against the present, which he now supports, may have been very great, and I am willing to thank him for his past services. They may be a private consolation to himself. I differ from him in his account of this transaction. He was pledged to his eleven propositions. His offer was the propositions. Ours the taxes. He took the latter, but forgets the former. I leave both, and come to his system. Here it becomes necessary to go back a little. I begin with your free trade obtained in 1779. By that you recovered your right to trade with every part of the world, whose ports were open to you, subject to your own unstipulated duties, the British plantations only excepted. By that you obtained the benefit of your insular situation, the benefit of your western situation, and the benefit of your exemption from intolerable taxes. What these advantages might be, no man could say, but any man who had seen the struggle you had made during a century of depression, could foresee, that a spirit of industry operating upon a state of liberty in a young nation, must in the course of time produce signal advantages. The sea is like the earth, to non-exertion, a waste, to industry a mine. This trade was accompanied with another, a plantation trade. In this you retained your right to trade directly with the British plantations in a variety of articles, without a reference to British duties; by this you obtained a right to trade with the British plantations directly in each and every other article, subject to the rate of British duty; by this you obtained a right to select the article, so that the general trade should not hang on the special conformity; and by this, you did not covenant to affect, exclude, or postpone the produce

of foreign plantations.—The reason was obvious. You demanded two things, a free trade and a plantation trade. Had the then minister insisted on a covenant to exclude the produce of foreign plantations, he had given you a plantation trade instead of a free trade, whereas your demand was both, and his grant had been inadequate, unsatisfactory and inadmissible—These points of trade being settled, a third in the opinion of some remained; namely, the intercourse with England or the channel trade.—A successful political campaign, an unsuccessful harvest, the poverty of not a few, together with the example of England, brought forward, in the year 1783, a number of famishing manufacturers with a demand of protecting duties; the extent of their demand was idle, the manner of conveying that demand tumultuary; but not being wholly resisted nor yet adequately assisted, they laid the foundation of another plan, which made its appearance in 1785, opposite indeed to their wishes and fatal to their expectations.—This was the system of reciprocity; a system fair in its principle, and in process of time likely to be beneficial, but not likely to be of any great present advantage, other than by stopping the growth of demand, allaying a commercial fever, and producing settlement and incorporation, with the people of England. This system was founded, on the only principle which could obtain between two independent nations: equality, and the equality consisted in similarity of duty. Now as the total abatement of duties on both sides had driven the Irishman out of his own market, as the raising our duties to the British standard had driven the Englishman out of the Irish market, a third method was resorted to, the abatement of British duty to the Irish standard. But then this equality of duty was inequality of trade; for as the Englishman with that duty against him had beaten you in the Irish market, with that duty in his favour he must keep you out of the English: so that under this arrangement the English manufacturer continued protected, and the Irish manufacturer continued exposed, and the abatement of duty was no

more than disarming the argument of retaliation. Had the arrangement stopped here, it had been unjust indeed, but as Ireland was to covenant that she would not raise her duties on British manufactures, England on her part was to covenant, that she would not diminish her preference in favour of Irish linen, and the adjustment amounted to a covenant, that neither country in their respective markets would affect the manufacture of the other by any operative alteration of duty. However, the adjustment did not stop at the home manufacture: it went to plantation produce; and here you stood on two grounds, law and justice: law, because you only desired that the same words of the same act of navigation should have the same construction on one side the channel as they have on the other. How they had ever born a different one, I cannot conceive, otherwise than by supposing that in your ancient state of dependency you were not entitled to the common benefit of the mother tongue. The answer to this argument was unsatisfactory, that England had altered the law. But if England had so altered the law, it ceased to impose the same restrictions and confer the same advantages, and then a doubt might arise whether the act of navigation was the law of Ireland, so that you seemed entitled to the construction or free from the act. Now it is of more consequence to England that you should be bound by the act of navigation, than to Ireland to have the benefit of the fair construction of it. But you stood on still better ground: justice. Was it just that you should receive plantation goods from England, and that England should not receive them from you? here if you do not find the law equal, you may make it so; for as yet you are a free parliament.

I leave this part of the subject: equality of duty but no present equality of trade. I come to that part of the adjustment which is inequality of both. And first, that part which relates to the primum of your manufactures. When the original propositions were argued, gentlemen exclaimed, "England reserves her wool, and Ireland does not reserve her woollen yarn." It was answered, "Ireland may if she

pleases." What will those gentlemen now say, when England reserves both: the primum of her manufactures, and of yours? and not only woollen yarn, but linen yarn, hides, &c.? To tell me that this exportation is beneficial to Ireland, is to tell me nothing. The question is not about stopping the export, but giving up the regulation, in instances where England retains the power of regulation, and the act of prohibition. To tell me, that this exportation is necessary for England is to tell me only that you are material to England, and therefore should have obtained at least equal terms. I own, to assist the manufactures of Great Britain as far as is not absolutely inconsistent with those of Ireland is to me an object. But still the difference recurs, she is not content with voluntary accommodation on your part, but exacts perpetual export from you in the very article, in which she retains absolute prohibition. There is, indeed, no new prohibition. Every prohibition beneficial to England was laid before and none in favour of Ireland. Ireland till 1779 was a province, and every province is a victim. Your provincial state ceased, but before the provincial regulations are done away, this arrangement establishes a principle of *uti possidetis*, that is, Great Britain shall retain all her advantages, and Ireland shall retain all her disadvantages. But I leave this part of the adjustment where reciprocity is disclaimed in the outset of treaty and the rudiment of manufacture. I come to instances of more striking inequality, and first, your situation in the East. You are to give a monopoly to the present, or any future East India company during its existence, and to the British nation for ever after. It has been said that the Irishman in this is in the same situation as the Englishman; but there is this difference, the difference between having, and not having the trade. The British parliament has judged it most expedient for Great Britain to carry on her trade to the East, by an exclusive company. The Irish parliament is now to determine it most expedient for Ireland to have no trade at all in these parts. This is not a surrender of

the political rights of the constitution, but of the natural rights of man; not of the privileges of parliament, but of the rights of nations. Not to sail beyond the Cape of Good Hope and the Streights of Magellan, an awful interdict! Not only European settlements, but neutral countries excluded, and God's providence shut out in the most opulent boundaries of creation. Other interdicts go to particular places for local reasons, because they belong to certain European states. But here are neutral regions forbidden and a path prescribed to the Irishman on open sea. Other interdicts go to a determinate period of time; but here is an eternity of restraint. You are to have no trade at all during the existence of any company, and no free trade to those countries after its expiration. This resembles rather a judgment of God than an act of the legislature, whether you measure it by immensity of space or infinity of duration, and has nothing human about it except its presumption.

What you lose by this surrender, what you forfeit by giving up the possibility of intercourse with so great a proportion of the inhabited globe, I cannot presume to say. But this I can say, that gentlemen have no right to argue from the present want of capital against future trade, nor to give up their capacity to trade, because they have not yet brought that capacity into action: still less have they a right to do so without the shadow of compensation; and least of all, on the affected compensation which, trifling with your understanding as well as interest, suffers a vessel to go to the West, in its way to the East. I leave this uncompensated surrender. I leave your situation in the East which is blank. I leave your situation in the East which is the surrender of trade itself; and I come to your situation in the West which is a surrender of its freedom. You are to give a monopoly to the British plantations at their own taxes. Before, you did so only in certain articles, with a power of selection, and then only as long as you pleased to conform to the condition, and

without any stipulation to exclude foreign produce. It may be very proper to exclude foreign produce by your own temporary laws, and at your own free will and option, but now you are to covenant to do so for ever, and thereby you perpetually put the trade out of your own power, and you give to the English, West as well as East, an eternal monopoly for their plantation produce, in the taxing and regulating of which you have no sort of deliberation or interference, and over which Great Britain has a complete supremacy. Here you will consider the advantage you receive from that monopoly, and judge how far it may be expedient to set up against yourselves that monopoly for ever. There is scarcely an article of the British plantations that is not here out of all proportion dearer than the same article is in any other part of the globe. Nor any one article that is not produced elsewhere. For some of which articles you might establish a market for your manufactures. Portugal, for instance, is capable of being a better market for our drapery than Great Britain. This enormity of price is aggravated by an enormity of tax. What then is this covenant? To take these articles from the British plantations, and from none other, at the present high rates and taxes, and to take them at all times to come, subject to whatever further rates and taxes the parliament of Great Britain shall enact. Let me ask you, why did you refuse protecting duties to your own people? Because they looked like a monopoly. And will you give to the East India merchant, and the West India planter something more? A monopoly where the monopolist is in some degree the lawgiver. The principle of equal duty or the same restriction is not the shadow of security. To make such a principle applicable to the objects they must be equal. But here the objects are not only dissimilar, but opposite. The condition of England is great debt and greater capital; great incumbrance, but still greater abilities. The condition of Ireland, little capital but a small debt; poverty, but exemption from intolerable taxes. Equal burthens will have

opposite effects. They will fund the debt of one country and destroy the trade of the other. High duties will take away your resource, which is exemption from them; but will be a fund for Great Britain. Thus the colony principle in its extent is dangerous to a very great degree. Suppose Great Britain should raise her colony duties to a still greater height, to answer the exigency of some future war, or to fund her present debt, you must follow; for by this bill you would have no option in foreign trade. You must follow, not because you wanted the tax, but lest your exemption from taxes should give your manufactures any comparative advantage. Irish taxes are to be precautions against the prosperity of Irish manufactures. You must follow because your taxes here would be no longer measured by the wants of the country or the interest of her commerce, because we should have instituted a false measure of taxation. The wants and the riches of another country, which exceeds you much in wants, but infinitely more in riches. I fear we should have done more. We should have made English jealousy the barometer of Irish taxes. Suppose this country should in any degree establish a direct trade with the British plantations; suppose the apprehensions of the British manufacturers in any degree realized, they may dictate your duties, they may petition the British parliament to raise certain duties, which shall not affect the articles of their intercourse, but may stop yours; or, which shall affect the articles of their intercouse a little and annihilate yours. Thus they may by one and the same duty raise a revenue in England, and destroy a rival in Ireland. Camblets are an instance of the former, and every valuable plantation import an instance of the latter. Your option in foreign trade had been a restraint on England, or a resource to Ireland, but under this adjustment you give up your foreign trade, and confine yourself to that which you must not presume to regulate. The exclusion of foreign plantation produce would seem sufficient, for every purpose of power and domination, but to aggravate,

and it would seem, to insult, the independent states of North America, are most ungraciously brought into this arrangement, as if Ireland was a British colony, or North America continued a part of the British dominion. By the resolutions, almost all the produce of North America was to be imported to Ireland, subject to British duties. The bill is more moderate, and only enumerates certain articles. But what right has Great Britain to interfere in our foreign trade? what right has she to dictate to us on the subject of North America trade? How far this country may be further affected by clogging her plantation trade and surrendering her free trade, I shall not for the present stop more minutely to inquire. But I must stop to protest against one circumstance in this arrangement, which should not accompany any arrangement, which would be fatal to settlement itself, and tear asunder the bands of faith and affection. The circumstance I mean, is the opening of the settlements of the colony trade, and free trade of 1779. This adjustment takes from you the power of choosing the article, so that the whole covenant hangs on the special circumstance, and takes from you your option in the produce of foreign plantations, and even of America. It is a revision in peace of the settlements of war. It is a revocation in peace of the acquisition of war. I here ask by what authority? By what authority is Ireland obliged now to enter into a general account for past acquisitions? Did the petition of the manufacturers desire it? Did the addresses of the last session desire it? Did the minister in this session suggest it? No. I call for authority, whereby we can be justified in waving the benefit of past treaties, and bringing the whole relative situation of this country into question in an arrangement, which only professes to settle her channel trade. I conceive the settlements of the last war are sacred. You may make other settlements with the British nation, but you will never make any so beneficial as these are. They were the result of a conjuncture miraculously formed, and fortunately seized. The

American war was the Irish harvest. From that period, as from the lucky moment of your fate, your commerce, constitution, and mind took form and vigour; and to that period, and to a first and silent principle must they recur for life and renovation. It is, therefore, I consider those settlements as sacred, and from them I am naturally led to that part of the subject which relates to compensation, the payment which we are to make for the losses which we are to sustain. Certainly compensation cannot apply to the free trade, supposing it uninvaded. First, because that trade was your right. To pay for the recovery of what you should never have lost, had been to a great degree unjust and derogatory. Secondly, because that free trade was established in 1779, and the settlement then closed, cannot be opened now. To do so were to destroy the faith of treaties; to make it idle to enter into the present settlement, and to render it vain to enter into any settlement with the British minister. The same may be said of the colony trade. That too, was settled in 1779, on terms then specified, not now to be opened, clogged, conditioned or circumscribed. Still less does compensation apply to the free constitution of 1782. His majesty then informed you from the throne, "these things come unaccompanied with any stipulation;" besides, the free constitution, like free trade, was your right. Freemen wont pay for the recovery of right. Payment had derogated from the claim of right; so we then stated to ministry. It was then thought that to have annexed subsidy to constitution had been a barren experiment on publick poverty, and had marred an illustrious experiment on the feelings of the nation, and had been neither satisfaction to Ireland, nor revenue to Great Britain. This bolder policy, this happy art, which saw how much may be got by tax, and how much must be left to honour, which made a bold push for the heart of the nation, and leaving her free to acquire, took a chance for her disposition to give, had its effect. For since that time until the present most unfortunate

attempt, a great bulk of the community were on the side of government, and the parliamentary constitution was a guarantee for publick peace.

See then, what you obtained without compensation, a colony trade, a free trade, the independency of your judges, the government of your army, the extention of the constitutional powers of your council, the restoration of the judicature of your lords, and the independency of your legislature!

See now, what you obtain by compensation. A covenant not to trade beyond the Cape of Good Hope and the Streights of Magellan. A covenant not to take foreign plantation produce, but as the parliament of Great Britain shall permit. A covenant not to take British plantation produce, but as Great Britain shall prescribe. A covenant to make such acts of navigation as Great Britain shall prescribe. A covenant never to protect your own manufactures, never to guard the primum of those manufactures! These things are accompanied, I do acknowledge, with a covenant on the part of England to disarm your argument for protecting duties; to give the English language in the act of navigation the same construction in Ireland, and to leave our linen markets without molestation or diminution. One should think some God presided over the liberties of this country, who made it frugality in the Irish nation to continue free, but has annexed the penalties of fine as infamy to the surrender of the constitution! From this consideration of commerce, a question much more high, much more deep, the invaluable question of constitution arises, in which the idea of protecting duties, the idea of reciprocal duties, of countervailing duties, and all those details vanish, and the energies of every heart, and the prudence of every head, are called upon to shield this nation, that long depressed, and at length by domestick virtue and foreign misfortune emancipated, has now to defend her newly acquired rights, and her justly acquired reputation. The question is no less than that, which three years ago agitated, fired and exalted the Irish nation, the independency

of the Irish parliament. By this bill we are to covenant that the parliament of Ireland shall subscribe whatever laws the parliament of England shall prescribe, respecting your trade with the British plantations, your trade in the produce of foreign plantations, and part of your trade from the United States of North America. There is also a sweeping covenant or condition, whereby we are to agree to subscribe whatever laws the parliament of England shall prescribe respecting navigation. The adjustment, subjects also, your reversionary trade to the east, to the the same terms. Over all these objects you are to have no propounding, no deliberative, no negative, no legislative power whatsoever. Here then, is an end of your free trade and your free constitution. I acquit the people of England. An ill-grounded jealousy for their trade seems aggravated by a well-founded alarm for your liberty. Unwilling to relinquish, but when relinquished, too magnanimous and too wise to resume abdicated tyranny. They feel in these propositions an honourable solicitude for the freedom of Ireland, and the good faith of Great Britain, and see the darling principles and passions of both countries wounded in an arrangement which was to compose them for ever. To a proposal therefore, so little warranted by the great body of the people of England, so little expected by the people of Ireland, so little suggested by the minister, and so involving whatever is dear to your interest, honour and freedom, I answer, No. I plead past settlements. I insist on the faith of nations. The objection should have been made when these settlements were preparing. Now the logick of empire comes too late. No accommodation, no deprecation on this subject. Assertion, national assertion, national reassertion! If three years after the recovery of your freedom you bend, your children, corrupted by your example, will surrender. But if you stand firm and inexorable, you make a seasonable impression on the people of England, you give a wholesome example to your children, you afford an

awful instruction to his majesty's ministers, and make, as the old English did in the case of their charter, the attempt on Irish liberty, its confirmation and establishment.

However, lest certain glosses should seem to go unanswered, I shall, for the sake of argument, wave past settlements, and combat the reasoning of the English resolutions, the address, his Majesty's answer, and the reasoning of this day. It is here said that the laws respecting commerce and navigation should be similar and inferred, that Ireland should subscribe the laws of England on those subjects; that is, the same law, the same legislature. But this argument goes a great deal too far. It goes to the army: for the mutiny bill should be the same. It was endeavoured to be extended to the collection of your revenue, and is in train to be extended to your taxes. It goes to the extinction of the most invaluable part of your parliamentary capacity. It is a union, an incipient and a creeping union; a virtual union, establishing one will in the general concerns of commerce and navigation, and reposing that will in the parliament of Great Britain; a union where our parliament preserves its existence after it has lost its authority, and our people are to pay for a parliamentary representation. In opposing the right honourable gentleman's bill, I consider myself as opposing a union *in limine*, and that argument for union which makes similarity of law and community of interest (reason strong for the freedom of Ireland) a pretence for a condition which would be dissimilarity of law, because extinction of constitution, and therefore hostility, not community of interest. I ask on what experience is this argument founded? Have you ever since your redemption refused to preserve a similarity of law in trade and navigation? Have you not followed Great Britain in all her changes of the act of navigation, during the whole of that unpalatable business, the American war? Have you not excluded the cheap produce of other plantations, in order that Irish poverty might give a monopoly to the dear produce of British colonies?

Have you not made a better use of your liberty than Great Britain did of her power? But I have an objection to this argument, stronger even than its want of foundation, in reason and experiment. I hold it to be nothing less than an intolerance of the parliamentary constitution of Ireland, a declaration that the full and free external legislation of the Irish parliament is incompatible with the British empire. I do acknowledge that by your external power, you might discompose the harmony of empire, and I add, that by your power over the purse you might dissolve the state. But to the latter you owe your existence in the constitution, and to the former your authority and station in the empire. This argument, therefore, rests the connexion upon a new and a false principle. It goes directly against the root of parliament. It is not a difficulty to be accommodated, but an errour to be eradicated. If any body of men can still think that the Irish constitution is incompatible with the British empire, doctrine which I abjure as sedition against the connexion; if any body of men are justified in thinking that the Irish constitution is incompatible with the British empire, perish the empire! live the constitution! Reduced by this false dilemma to take a part, my second wish is the British empire, my first wish and bounden duty is the liberty of Ireland. But we are told this imperial power is not only necessary for England, but safe for Ireland. What is the present? what but the abuse of this very power of regulating the trade of Ireland by the British parliament excluding you, and including herself by virtue of the same words of the same act of navigation? And what was the promovent cause of this arrangement? What, but the power you are going to surrender, the distinct and independent external authority of the Irish parliament, competent to question that misconstruction? What is the remedy now proposed? The evil. Go back to the parliament of England. I ask again, what were the difficulties in the way of your eleven propositions? Will you make the English parliament yours, and that too on the sub-

ject of their jealousy, and in the moment they displayed it. I will suppose that jealousy realized. I will suppose that you rival them in some market abroad; and that they petition their parliament to impose a regulation which shall affect a tonnage which you have, and Great Britain has not. How would you then feel your situation, when you should be obliged to register all this? And how would you feel your degradation, when you should see your own manufacturers pass you by as a cypher in the constitution, and depreeate their ruin at the bar of a foreign parliament! Whence the American war? Whence the Irish restrictions? Whence the misconstruction of the act of navigation? Whence but from the evil of suffering one country to regulate the trade and navigation of another, and of instituting, under the idea of general protectress, a proud domination, which sacrifices the interest of the whole to the ambition of a part, and arms the little passions of the monopolist with the sovereign potency of an imperial parliament? For great nations when cursed with unnatural sway follow but their nature when they invade; and human wisdom has not better provided for human safety than by limiting the principles of human power. The surrender of legislature has been likened to cases that not unfrequently take place between two equal nations covenanting to suspend in particular cases their legislative powers for mutual benefit. Thus Great Britain and Portugal agree to suspend their legislative power in favour of the wine of the one, and the woollens of the other, but if Portugal had gone further, and agreed to subscribe the laws of England, this covenant had not been a treaty, but conquest. So Great Britain and Ireland may covenant, not to raise high duties on each other's manufactures; but if Ireland goes further, and covenants to subscribe British law, this is not a mutual suspension of the exercise of legislative power, but a transfer of the power itself from one country to another, to be exercised by another hand. Such covenants is not reciprocity of trade. It is a surrender of the government of your trade. Inequality of trade and

inequality of constitution. I speak, however, as if such transfer could take place, but in fact it could not. Any arrangement so covenanting is a mere nullity. It could not bind your successours. For a man is not omnipotent over himself. Neither are your parliaments omnipotent over themselves, to accomplish their own destruction and propagate death to their successours. There is in these cases a superiour relationship to our respective creators. God, in the instance of the individual, arrests the hand of suicide, and the community in that of the political body, stops the act of surrender, and makes man the means of propagation, and parliament the organ to continue liberty, not the engine to destroy it. However, though the surrender is void, there are two ways of attempting it: one by a surrender in form; the other by a surrender in substance; appointing another parliament your substitute; and consenting to be its register or stamp, by virtue of which to introduce the law and edict of another land; to clothe with the forms of your law, foreign deliberations, and to preside over the disgraceful ceremony of your own abdicated authority. Both methods are equally surrenders; and both are wholly void. I speak on principle, the principle on which you stand: your creation. We, the limited trustees of the delegated power, born for a particular purpose, limited to a particular time, and bearing an inviolable relationship to the people who sent us to parliament, cannot break that relationship, counteract that purpose, surrender, diminish, or derogate from those privileges we breathe but to preserve. Could the parliament of England covenant to subscribe your laws? Could she covenant that young Ireland should command and old England should obey? If such a proposal to England were mockery, to Ireland it cannot be constitution. I rest on authority as well as principle, the authority on which the revolution rests. Mr. Locke, who, in his chapter on the abolition of government, says, that the transfer of legislative power is the abolition of the state, not a transfer. Thus I may congratulate this house and myself, that

it is one of the blessings of the British constitution, that it cannot perish of a rapid mortality, nor die in a day, like the men who should protect it. Any act that would destroy the liberty of the people, is dead born from the womb. Men may put down the publick cause for a season, but another year would see old constitution advance the honours of its head, and the good institution of parliament shaking off the tomb to re-ascend in all its pomp and pride, and plenitude and privilege!

Sir, I have stated these propositions and the bill as a mere transfer of external legislative authority to the parliament of Great Britain; but I have underrated their mischief. They go to taxation, taxes on the trade with the British plantations, taxes on the produce of foreign plantations, taxes on some of the produce of the United States of North America. They go to port duties, such as Great Britain laid on America! The mode is varied, but the principle is the same. Here Great Britain takes the stamp of the Irish parliament. Great Britain is to prescribe, and Ireland is to obey! We anticipate the rape by previous surrender, and throw into the scale our honour, as well as our liberty. Do not imagine, that all these resolutions are mere acts of regulation. They are solid substantial revenue, and great part of your additional duty. I allow the bill excepts rum and tobacco, but the principle is retained, and the operation of it only kept back. I have stated that Great Britain may by these propositions crush your commerce. I presume I shall be told that the commercial jealousy of Great Britain is at an end. But are her wants at an end? Are her wishes for Irish subsidy at an end? No. They are not at an end. They remain, and may be gratified by laying colony duties on herself, and so raising on Ireland an imperial revenue to be subscribed by our parliament, without its consent, and in despite of our people. Or, if a minister should please to turn himself to a general excise, if wishing to relieve from the weight of further additional duties the hereditary revenue now alienated;

if wishing to relieve the alarms of the English manufacturers, who complain of our exemption from excises, particularly on soap, candles, and leather, should proceed on those already registered articles of taxation, he might tax you by threats, suggesting that if you refuse to raise an excise on yourself, England will raise colony duties on both. See what a mighty instrument of coercion this bill and these resolutions are. Stir, and the minister can crush you in the name of Great Britain. He can crush your imports; he can crush your exports; he can do this in a manner peculiarly mortifying, by virtue of a clause in a British act of parliament that would seem to impose the same restrictions on Great Britain. He can do this in a manner still more offensive, by the immediate means of your own parliament, who would be then an active cypher, and notorious stamp in the hands of Great Britain, to forge and falsify the name and authority of the people of Ireland. I have considered your situation under these propositions with respect to Great Britain. See what would be your situation with respect to the crown? You would have granted to the king a perpetual money bill, or a money bill to continue as long as the parliament of Great Britain shall please, with a covenant to increase it as often as it may propose. By the resolutions a great part of the additional duty would have been so granted. The trade of the country is made dependent on the parliament of Great Britain, and the crown is made less dependent of the parliament of Ireland, and a code of prerogative added to a code of empire. If the merchant after this should petition you to lower your duties on the articles of trade, your answer, "trade is in covenant." If your constituents should instruct you to limit the bill of supply, or pass a short money bill, your answer, "the purse of the nation like her trade is in covenant." No more of six months money bills; no more of instructions from constituents; that connexion is broken by this bill. Pass the bill, and you have no constituent; you are not the representative of

the people of Ireland, but the register of the British parliament, and the equaliser of British duties.

In order to complete this chain of power, one link, I do acknowledge, was wanting, a perpetual revenue bill, or a covenant from time to time to renew the bill for the collection thereof. The twentieth resolution, and this bill founded upon it, attain that object. Sir, this house rests on three pillars; your power over the annual mutiny bill; your power over the annual additional duties; your power over the collection of the revenue. The latter power is of great consequence, because a large part of our revenues is granted for ever. Your ancestors were slaves. The act of settlement granted the hereditary revenue, and from that moment you ceased to be a parliament. Nor was it till many years after that parliament revived. But it revived as you, under this bill, would continue; without parliamentary power. Every evil measure derived argument, energy, and essence from this constitutional fund. If a country gentleman complained of the expenses of the crown, he was told a frugal government could go on without a parliament, and that we held our existence, by withholding the discharge of our duty. However, though the funds were granted for ever, the provision for the collection was inadequate. The smuggler learned to evade the penalties; and parliament, though not necessary for granting the hereditary revenue, became necessary for its collection. Here then, we rest on three pillars: the annual mutiny bill, the annual additional supply, and the annual collection of the revenue. If you remove all these, this fabrick falls; remove any one of them, and it totters. For it is not the mace, nor the chair, nor this dome, but the deliberate voice resident therein that constitutes the essence of parliament. Clog your deliberations, and you are no longer a parliament, with a thousand gaudy surviving circumstances of show and authority.

Contemplate for a moment the powers this bill presumes to perpetuate. A perpetual repeal of trial by jury; a perpetual repeal of the great charter; a

perpetual writ of assistance; a perpetual felony to strike an exciseman.

The late Chief Baron Burgh, speaking on the revenue bill, exclaimed, "you give to the dipping rule, what you should deny to the sceptre."

All the unconstitutional powers of the excise we are to perpetuate. The constitutional powers of parliament we are to abdicate. Can we do all this? Can we make these bulky surrenders, in diminution of the power, in derogation of the pride of parliament, and in violation of those eternal relationships, which the body that represents should bear to the community which constitutes?

The pretence given for this unconstitutional idea is weak indeed. That as the benefits are permanent, so should be the compensation. But trade laws are to follow their nature, revenue laws to follow their's. On the permanent nature of commercial advantages depends the faith of trade. On the limited nature of revenue laws depends the existence of parliament. But the errour of the argument arises from the vice of dealing. It is a market for a constitution, and a logick, applicable to barter only, is applied to freedom. To qualify this dereliction of every principle and power, the surrender is made constitutional; that is, the British market for the Irish constitution; the shadow of a market for the substance of a constitution. You are to reserve an option, trade or liberty. If you mean to come to the British market you must pass under the British yoke. I object to this principle in every shape; whether you are, as the resolution was first worded, directly to transfer legislative power to the British parliament; whether, as it was altered, you are to covenant to subscribe her acts; or whether, as it is now softened, you are to take the chance of the British market, so long as you wave the blessings of the British constitution; terms dishonourable, derogatory, incapable of forming the foundation of any fair and friendly settlement, injurious to the political morality of the nation. I would not harbour a slavish principle, nor give it the hospi-

tality of a night's lodging in a land of liberty. Slavery is like any other vice, tolerate and you embrace. You should guard your constitution by settled maxims of honour, as well as wholesome rules of law; and one maxim should be, never to tolerate a condition which trenches on the privilege of parliament, or derogates from the pride of the island. Liberal in matters of revenue, practicable in matters of commerce, on these subjects I would be inexorable. If the genius of Old England came to that bar, with the British constitution in one hand, and in the other an offer of all that England retains, or all that she has lost of commerce, I should turn my back on the latter, and pay my obeisance to the blessings of her constitution; for that constitution will give you commerce; and it was the loss of that constitution that deprived you of commerce. Why are you not now a woollen country? Because another country regulated your trade. Why are you not now a country of reexport? Because another country regulated your navigation. I oppose the original terms as slavish, and I oppose the conditional clause as an artful way of introducing slavery, of soothing a high spirited nation into submission by the ignominious delusion that she may shake off the yoke when she pleases, and once more become a free people. The direct unconstitutional proposition could not have been listened to, and therefore resort is had to the only possible chance of destroying the liberty of the people, by holding up the bright reversion of the British constitution, and the speculation of future liberty, as a consolation for the present submission. But would any gentleman here wear a livery to night, because he might lay it aside in the morning? or would this house substitute another, because next year it might resume its authority, and once more become the parliament of Ireland? I do not believe we shall get the British, nor do I want to make an experiment on the British market, by making an experiment likewise on the constitution and spirit of the people of Ireland. But do not imagine if you

shall yield for a year, you will get so easily clear of this inglorious experiment. If this is not the British market, why accept the adjustment? and if it is, the benefit thereof may take away your deliberative voice. You will be bribed out of your constitution by your commerce. There are two ways of taking away free will: the one by direct compulsion, the other by establishing a propellant motive. Thus a servant of the crown may lose his free will, when he is to give his vote at the hazard of his office; and thus a parliament would lose its free will, if it acted under a conviction that it exercised its deliberative function at the risk of its commerce. No one question would stand upon its own legs, but each question would involve every consideration of trade, and indeed the whole relative situation of the two countries. And I beseech you to consider that situation, and contemplate the powers of your own country, before you agree to surrender them. Recollect that you have now a right to trade with the British plantations in certain articles, without reference to British duties. That you have a right to trade with the British plantations in every other article, subject to the British duties. That you have a right to get clear of each and of every part of that bargain. That you have a right to take the produce of foreign plantations, subject to your own unstipulated duties. That you have a right to carry on a free and unqualified trade with the United States of North America. That you have a right to carry on an experimental trade in countries contiguous to which Great Britain has established her monopolies, the power of trade this, and an instrument of power and station and authority in the British empire. Consider that you have likewise a right to the exclusive supply of your own market, and to the exclusive reserve of the rudiment of your manufactures; that you have an absolute dominion over the publick purse, and over the collection of the revenue. If you ask me how you shall use these powers, I say for Ireland, with due regard to the British nation, let them be governed by the spi-

rit of concord, and with fidelity to the connexion; but when the mover of the bill asks me to surrender those powers, I am astonished at him. I have neither ears, nor eyes, nor functions to make such a sacrifice. What! that free trade, for which we exerted every nerve in 1779, that free constitution for which we pledged life and fortune in 1782! Our lives are at the service of the empire; but—our liberties! No. We received them from our Father who is in Heaven, and we will hand them down to our children. But if gentlemen can entertain a doubt of the mischief of these propositions, are they convinced of their safety, the safety of giving up the government of your trade? No. The mischief is prominent, but the advantage is of a most enigmatical nature. Have gentlemen considered the subject, have they traced even the map of the countries, the power or freedom of trading with whom they are to surrender for ever? Have they traced the map of Asia, Africa, and America? Do they know the French, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish settlements? Do they know the neutral powers of those countries, their produce, aptitudes, and dispositions? Have they considered the state of North America, its present condition, future growth, and every opportunity in the endless succession of time attending that nurse of commerce and asylum of mankind? Are they now competent to declare on the part of themselves and all their posterity, that a free trade to those regions will never in the efflux of time be of any service to the kingdom of Ireland? If they have information on this subject it must be by a communication with God; for they have none with man. It must be inspiration, for it cannot be knowledge. In such circumstances to subscribe this agreement, without knowledge, without even the affectation of knowledge, when Great Britain, with all her experience, and every means of information from the East Indies, West Indies, America, and with the official knowledge of Ireland at her feet, has taken six months to deliberate, and has now produced twenty resolutions with a history to each, amounting

to a code of empire, not a system of commerce: I say in such circumstances for Ireland to subscribe this agreement would be infatuation, an infatuation to which the nation could not be a party; but would appear to be concluded or indeed huddled with all her posterity into a fallacious arrangement, by the influence of the crown, without the deliberation of parliament, or the consent of the people. This would appear the more inexcusable, because we are not driven to it. Adjustment is not indispensable. The great points have been carried. An inferiour question about the home market has been started, and a commercial fever artificially raised, but while the great points remain undisturbed, the nations cannot be committed. The manufacturers applied for protecting duties, and have failed. The minister offered a system of reciprocity, and succeeded in Ireland, but has failed in England. He makes you another offer inconsistent with the former, which offer the English do not support, and the Irish deprecate.

We can go on. We have a growing prosperity, and as yet an exemption from intolerable taxes. We can from time to time regulate our own commerce; cherish our manufactures; keep down our taxes; bring on our people; and brood over the growing prosperity of young Ireland. In the mean time we will guard our free trade and free constitution as our only real resources. They were the struggles of great virtue, the result of much perseverance, and our broad base of publick action. We should recollect that this house may now, with peculiar propriety, interpose; because you did with great zeal and success, on this very subject of trade, bring on the people; and you did with great prudence and moderation, on another occasion, check a certain description of the people; and you are now called upon by consistency to defend the people. Thus mediating between extremes, you will preserve this Island long, and preserve her with a certain degree of renown. Thus faithful to the constitution of the country, you will command and ensure her tranquillity,

for our best authority with the people is, protection afforded against the ministers of the crown. It is not publick injury that should alarm you. Your high ground of expostulation with your fellow subjects has been your services; the free trade you have given the merchant, and the free constitution you have given the island! Make your third great effort, preserve them, and with them preserve unaltered your own calm sense of publick right, the dignity of the parliament, the majesty of the people, and the powers of the island. Keep them unsullied, uncovenanted, uncircumscribed, and unstipendiary. These paths are the paths to glory; and let me add, these ways are the ways of peace: so shall the prosperity of your country, though without a tongue to thank you, yet laden with the blessings of constitution and of commerce, bear attestation to your services, and wait on your progress with involuntary praise.

END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

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